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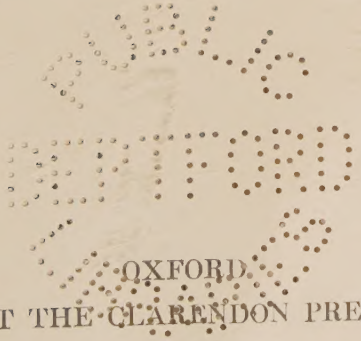
OXFORD COUNTY HISTORIES

ESSEX

By W. H. WESTON



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PREFACE

In view of the present trend of educational thought in regard to the teaching of history, it is scarcely necessary to dwell upon the importance of especially directing the attention of our scholars to the events which have happened in their immediate neighbourhood. The movement in favour of the teaching of history largely through local associations and memorials is, indeed, a part of the wider movement of reaction against a too bookish and impersonal treatment of the subject.

Teachers will, I believe, generally agree that old methods of teaching history, with undue insistence upon dates and unrelated facts, frequently awakened in the minds of the pupils an actual distaste for the subject. Under such conditions, history ceased to possess any of the elements of a story or any vital interest in relation to life, and became a distasteful and, to the child-mind, useless mental drudgery.

Yet, rightly presented, history is of unfailing and universal interest. Nor is it necessary to emphasize the educational value of its teachings and their importance in furnishing a key to the right interpretation and understanding of the present.

A child's interest in the story of the past is awakened immediately he begins to visualize it, and to realize that the doings and great men of past times were as real and actual as the events of which he reads in the newspaper or the popular hero whom he cheers in the streets.

The association of historical events with neighbouring

places and memorials furnishes a most effective means of enabling the scholars thus to realize the facts of history as actual events. Indeed, presented in this way, past events become, in a sense, concrete to the youthful mind. Much has been done when the child has been brought to form mental pictures of events in a local setting with which he is familiar ; when, for instance, he has in his mind's eye caught a glimpse of the Roman legions marching along a well-known road, or the Danish pirates landing on the shores of a familiar creek.

But the interest of history for the child extends beyond the mere love of a story when he finds that its teachings touch his daily life in a hundred points. This lesson of the relationship of the past with the present can be taught with especial effectiveness from local history, particularly in districts, such as South-West Essex, where the history of the district has been greatly influenced by the geographical nature and position of the region.

It is, however, I believe, important that the knowledge of local history should be brought into a general relationship with the wider history of our country. I have therefore sought to give, within the limits possible in this book, a consecutive narrative of the events in the history of Essex in their connexion with the history of England. Obviously, however, the space allotted to any period or event must, in many cases, be very disproportionate to the space which would be given to the same period or event in a general history of England. Thus the reign of Edward I, of great importance in the history of our country, is here but lightly touched upon. On the other hand, events with which Essex is especially associated, such as the Rising of 1381, are somewhat fully dealt with. I have, in fact, endeavoured to carry out the principle

enunciated in the Board of Education's Circular on the Teaching of History: "All great and important events which have taken place in the neighbourhood will naturally be chosen for more detailed treatment."

This little book will, I believe, be also found in accord with a further principle laid down in the Circular: "There must in all cases be included a study of those actually existent historical remains, such as castles, city walls, monasteries, which are accessible from the school, and in connexion with this the study of the earlier periods must include some knowledge of the elements of architecture. It is far more important that pupils should leave school with their eyes trained to observe the historical remains which are to be found in almost every part of England, than that they should attempt to remember the whole of the political history, much of which they cannot understand." In accordance with this principle, I have endeavoured to give, in simple language, some account of the most notable of these historic remains in our county; from those of prehistoric or undetermined antiquity down through the recognized great periods of architecture. I have, however, avoided dealing with architectural details except in the broadest way. But, while the subject is treated only in outline, sufficient space has, I trust, been devoted to it to enable the scholar, with the assistance of the illustrations in the book and the guidance of the teacher, to identify the leading features of the great styles of building.

Such a knowledge enables a child to arrange historical facts in an orderly sequence; the events of the reigns of the three Edwards are, for example, mentally associated with the Decorated style of building. Moreover, the knowledge of the leading features of the great architec-

tural styles can hardly fail to be a source of frequent interest in after life. Much, surely, has been gained if an old abbey or castle becomes a source of vivid and intelligent interest instead of being merely an object of dull and inappreciative sight-seeing.

Most of the illustrations in the book have been reproduced from old prints. They will, I trust, be found both interesting and of considerable educational value. In this connexion I have to acknowledge the great assistance given by Mr. J. Avery, of Forest Gate, who has kindly allowed the reproduction of a number of plates from his remarkable collection of Essex prints.

I wish also to acknowledge the very great help which I have derived, in the preparation of the book, from the very valuable suggestions and comments of Mr. C. R. L. Fletcher, of Magdalen College, Oxford.

It is, perhaps, scarcely necessary to refer to the numerous authorities consulted. It is, however, fitting that acknowledgements should be especially made to such sources of information as the *Victoria County History*, the *Memorials of Old Essex*, a number of papers in the *Essex Naturalist* and other Essex periodicals, and to the old county histories, particularly the works of Morant and Wright.

W. H. WESTON.

May, 1909.

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ESSEX

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CHAPTER I

IN THE BEGINNING

The story of man in Essex goes back to a period long before the beginning of written history. Indeed, for countless ages before the time when man first appeared in our land, the forces of Nature had been gradually fashioning and shaping it for his use. The story of the slow changes by which the surface of the land took on its present form is revealed to us by the different earth-layers which come to the surface in different places.

In our journeys by train, we see that the sides of the railway cuttings are sometimes of gravel, sometimes of clay, and sometimes of various kinds of hard stone. Even within the borders of our own county of Essex, we find in some places gravel, in others sand, or clay, or chalk, lying just below the surface soil.

Now if we examine different kinds of rock—and by rock we must understand any kind of earth-material—we find that some of them, granite for example, never contain any remains of plants or animals, and have evidently been formed under the influence of great heat. Such rocks as these come to the surface in the west of England but not in the east.

All the other rocks which come to the surface in our country are water-formed rocks. They are called sedimentary rocks, because they have been formed under water by the gradual settling down as a sediment of the mud and sand in the water, just as the mud gradually settles down at the bottom of a tumbler of muddy water. That these rocks were formed in this manner below

water is shown by the fact that they often contain the remains of shell-fish and of other water creatures which, long, long ago, were buried in the muddy or sandy sediment as it settled down.

In some layers, the fossil shells are the remains of salt-water shell-fish, so that the rocks in which they occur must have been formed at the bottom of the sea. In others, the remains are those of fresh-water creatures, so that the deposits in which they occur must have been formed in lakes or pools on the surface of the land. If we make a deep boring into the crust of the earth, we find that these different layers, some of fresh-water and others of sea-water sediments, lie one upon another. We are, therefore, forced to conclude that the earth's surface upon which we dwell has been, not once but many times, lowered below sea-level and raised again to form dry land.

These layers, however, do not lie evenly upon one another like a pile of books on a table. The earth's crust is subject to many strains and stresses; some sudden, which make themselves felt as earthquakes, others so slow that they can only be noticed by very careful observation.

These strains and stresses have so twisted and crumpled up the rock-layers that it is often very difficult to make out their original arrangement. We may, however, very roughly represent the arrangement of the rocks in England by a tilted pile of books, the top edges of which represent the different strata which come to the surface. The oldest of these layers come to the surface in the west of England. As we proceed eastward newer layers take their place, and the surface of Essex is in most parts of the county formed of comparatively recent deposits.

We must be careful not to think that England or

Essex-in-the-making was anything like the England or Essex we know now. Indeed, we have seen that it cannot have been, for the rock-layers tell us that it was often part of the bed of the sea. We know also that at other times it was part of a great continental land-mass and not part of an island as it is at present.

CHAPTER II

THE STORY OF THE ROCK-LAYERS

The oldest layer, of all that come to the surface in Essex, is the chalk, which appears in a small patch in the south of the county at Grays and Purfleet, and again in patches in the north-east. But though it comes to the surface in but a few places in Essex, the chalk really underlies nearly the whole of the county. Essex, indeed, forms part of a great trough or basin formed by a curve or hollow in several layers of rock, of which the lowest is, in most places, the chalk layer. This great hollow is called by geologists the London Basin, and is filled up by a number of other deposits, which come to the surface at different places. These different deposits make up the surface of the land we now call Essex, and the fossils they contain tell us some strange and wonderful stories of the state of affairs in this part of the world, long, long ages ago.

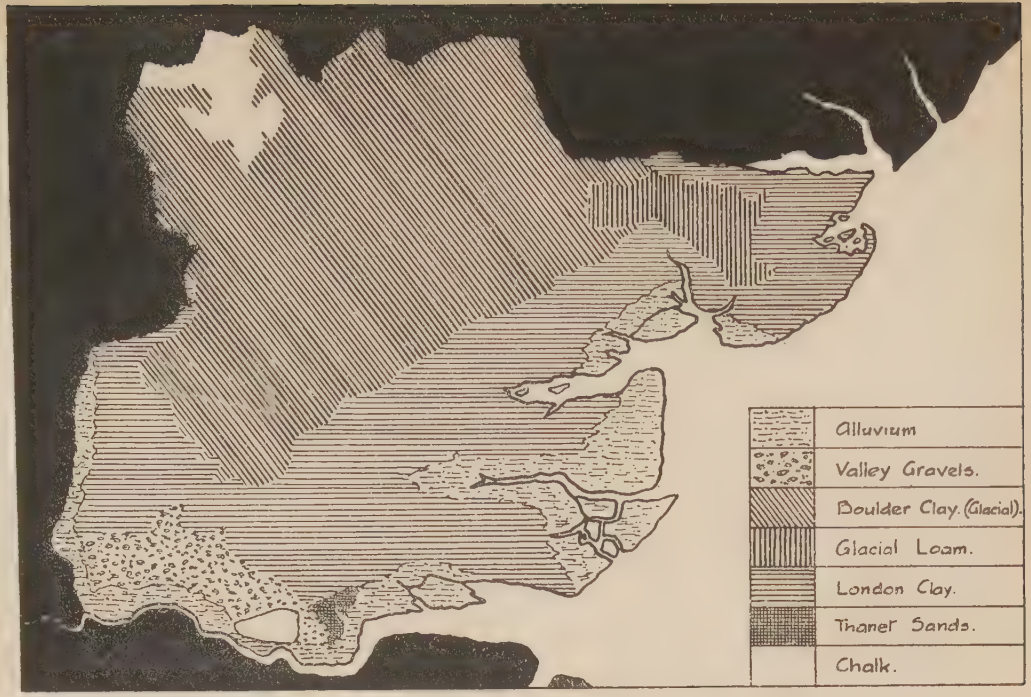
Let us take the layers in order and learn very briefly the story they have unfolded to men learned and patient enough to read it. First of all, the chalk fossils tell us that this layer was laid down through a long course of years at the bottom of a warm sea, just as similar chalk rock is now being formed at the bottom of the sea in various parts of the world. Above the chalk rocks

appear, in some parts of the county, sandy beds which are known as the Thanet Sands. These tell us of a shallow sea into which a great river flowed. This shallow sea in which the Thanet Sands were laid down must have become still shallower, for the next beds in our part of the country consist almost entirely of rounded pebbles, such as are formed by the rolling together of fragments of stone in shallow water. These layers are called the Woolwich and Reading Beds. In Essex the greater part of them has been worn away. The next layer in order, the London Clay, is the most important, so far as Essex is concerned, of those that come to the surface. It is a stiff, bluish clay, which turns brown where it is exposed to the air, and it covers the greater part of the surface of the county. Moreover, it is a very thick layer, which must have taken long years in being laid down. In South Essex it is 500 feet, or more, thick. Its fossils show that it was formed in a climate of almost tropical heat in the estuary of a great river.

After long years the climate became cooler but was still subtropical when the Bagshot Beds of buff-coloured sands and pebble-beds were laid down. You may find remains of these beds, resting upon the London Clay, at High Beech in Epping Forest, at Laindon Hills, and at other places in the county.

The next chapter in the story of the earth-layers is a startling one. It tells us of a wonderful change in climate, a change so great that the land was covered with an ice-cap much as Greenland is now. The ice-cap, with its millions of tons of ice, in its slow movement ground up the surface of the soil, so that frozen into its lower parts there were vast quantities of earth and stone.

When the climate improved and the ice began to melt, the earth and stones which had been embedded in it were



Sketch-Map of the Chief Earth-layers in Essex

deposited; much as the melting of the icebergs from the Arctic Ocean is to-day forming the great deposits which we call the Banks of Newfoundland. The deposits of the Ice Age, which are known as Glacial Drift and Boulder Clay, cover wide areas in Essex, and they form a large part of the fine cornlands for which the county has always been famous.

After the Ice Age, or Glacial Period, had passed away, the land which we now call Essex began to take something of its present form. The streams had by this time begun to flow along the present river valleys, and the surface was being gradually carved by the rivers and the rains and the winds into the low, undulating hills that occupy a great part of the county and the wide flats that border the chief rivers.

At this time were laid down the Valley Gravels, which stretch from Leyton through Stratford and Barking to Romford. These are deposits of gravel and brick earth, which in some places, such as Ilford and Grays, are full of the bones of animals. Among these, the bones of that huge extinct elephant, the mammoth, of the gigantic Irish elk, and of other large animals may be recognized. So numerous are the remains in the brick earth at Ilford that they appear to tell us of some terrible calamity, possibly a sudden flood, which overwhelmed thousands of the animals which at that time roamed over the land.

At that far distant time the river had not cut so deeply into the land, and the Thames therefore flowed nearer Ilford than at present. Moreover, the Thames has tended for long ages to cut in more and more against the coast of Kent, while leaving wide expanses of marshy land upon the Essex side. It is to this cause that we owe the broad marshlands that border the Essex shore of the Thames, and which are so important a feature of both its geography and its history.

But the Valley Gravels have something more interesting to tell us than the story of the mammoth and the elk. They tell us of the coming of man into the land which the mighty forces of Nature had through long ages been slowly shaping for his dwelling-place. In none of the other layers about which we have spoken is there the slightest sign of the existence of man. No boat sailed upon the sunny waters of the ocean of the Chalk Period; no fisherman sought his food from the estuary of the London Clay.

But in the Valley Gravels the presence of man is indicated by his handiwork. Among the gravels we find rude weapons and tools of chipped flint fashioned by man to aid him in his struggle for existence among the beasts that roamed the land, and to dress the skins of those he killed.

Here then is the first dim beginning of history; the time of the Old Stone Age.

We must not suppose that with the time of the Valley Gravels the altering and re-shaping of the surface of Essex ceased. Nature is never in a state of rest; all things change and re-change. Every wave that beats upon the coast, every drop of water that flows seawards, bears its part in the changing of the surface. Thus while the sea on the north-east coast of Essex is rapidly beating away the land, the rivers in other parts are still laying down deposits of alluvial soil. But in the main, throughout the ages of history, Essex has been much as it is to-day. It nowhere rises to any great height, but is a land of rippling little hills and valleys, bordered by wide stretches of low-lying marshlands along the bank of its great river and along many parts of its coast.

CHAPTER III

THE STORY OF EARLY MAN IN ESSEX

A VAST period of time stretches from the days of the men of the valley gravels to the time when the written history of man in our land begins. How vast the period was, no one can say with certainty, for almost the only evidence of man's presence in the land is to be found in the tools and weapons which he fashioned.

Now in the earliest days, before he had learnt to cultivate the land, man was engaged in a constant struggle for life with the beasts of the field. His very life depended upon the food he could obtain from the animals which he killed upon the land and from the fish which he drew from the waters. As many of the animals were far larger and stronger than man, the first need of the early hunter was a weapon which would give him an advantage to outbalance the superior strength of the animals against whom he kept up a ceaseless struggle.

Man in the earliest stages of his upward progress knew nothing of the use of metals. The hardest materials with which he was acquainted were various kinds of stones, and he found that by carefully chipping some of these he could give them a sharp cutting edge. For long ages he knew of no other tools than such stone implements, or tools fashioned from the bones of animals. To these periods of time we give the name of the Stone Age. But we find that the Stone Age can be conveniently divided into two parts. In the first and earliest period the weapons or tools were very clumsily chipped, they were made in but few shapes, and they were never ground to a smooth surface and

edge. This period we call the Old Stone Age or, to use the learned word meaning the same thing, the Palaeolithic Age. The commonest stone that can readily be chipped to give a cutting edge is flint, and hence we find throughout the Stone Age that most of the weapons, especially the cutting weapons or tools, are fashioned out of flint.

We know that in many parts of the world the men of the Old Stone Age were cave-dwellers, for we find their tools embedded, together with the bones of animals, in the floors of many ancient caves. In Essex we find no trace of cave-dwellings. A good number of weapons of the Old Stone Age have, however, been found in the county, especially in the gravel river-terraces upon which the towns of Leyton and Walthamstow now stand, and in the river gravels along the valleys of the Thames and Roding. Probably, early man dwelt close to the river banks, partly because of the drinking-water the river gave him, partly because the watering-places of the wild beasts afforded favourable hunting-grounds, and partly on account of the fish with which the rivers teemed. In Essex the implements of the Old Stone Age which have been found are flakes, oval cutters, and tongue- or pear-shaped weapons. The flakes are merely rough chips of flint with a sharp edge. They may have been used to cut the flesh and skin of animals that had been killed, or to scrape the bones or hides. The oval cutters are oval or roughly circular in shape and are carefully chipped so as to give them sharp edges. Some people think that they were used as missiles. The tongue-shaped implements are the most characteristic. They are fashioned to a rough point as stabbing weapons, and were either used in the hand or, in some cases perhaps, fastened to a stout rod and used as hatchets.

The learned name for the Later Stone Age is the Neolithic (i.e. new stone) Age. The implements belonging

to this age show a very great advance in the skill of their makers. They are much better formed, being, indeed, often beautifully fashioned and polished. They are much more varied in shape, and with them rude specimens of pottery have been found in some parts. In Essex, however, little or no pottery which can with certainty be said to belong to the Later Stone Age has been found.

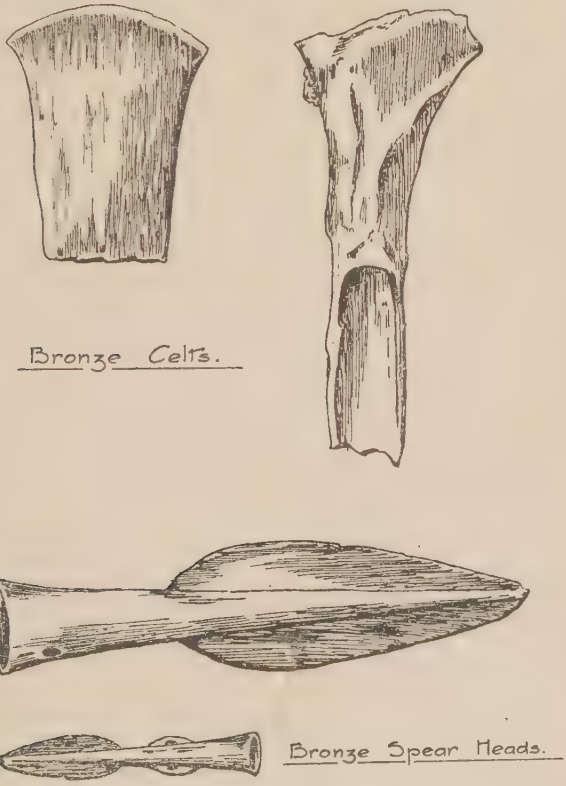
The characteristic weapon of the Later Stone Age is the celt, a stone axe or hatchet with a ground cutting edge. Well-shaped arrow-heads, spear-heads, and hammer-heads, drilled with a hole for the handle, are also found. Stone implements, which are believed to have been spindle whorls and weavers' weights, seem to show that the men of the Later Stone Age had some knowledge of the arts of spinning and weaving.

To this day, the men of this remote age have left the marks of their presence in many parts of Britain, in great mounds of earth, called, from their shape, Long Barrows. These mark the burial-places of the remains of some great chieftains of those ancient days. The bodies were placed, together with stone implements and, occasionally, articles of pottery, in chambers built of stones, while above them the earth was piled in great mounds measuring more in length than in breadth.

In Essex, no long barrows of the Stone Age are found. Possibly this is because for some hundreds of years Essex was a great corn-growing district and, the land being therefore valuable under the plough, such long barrows as existed may have been ploughed up and destroyed.

Probably for the same reason, there are in Essex none of the Round Barrows of prehistoric man such as are found in many other parts of England. These round barrows were built by men of quite a different race from the men of the Later Stone Age, as is shown by the different

shape of the skulls that are sometimes found in them. In these barrows we find weapons and tools made of bronze, so that they were built by men who had learnt how to smelt and mould or forge metals.



Essex Bronze Implements (West Ham Museum)

This use of metals for implements was, of course, a great improvement on the use of stone, and we therefore name the age, during which bronze was the common material for weapons and tools, the Bronze Age.

Though no prehistoric round barrows occur in Essex, numerous bronze implements have been found. In some cases, a large number of implements, as well as masses of unshaped metal, have been found close together, so that we may conclude that they formed the hoard, or stock-in-trade, of some ancient worker in metal, whom an evil chance forced to abandon his property. Such hoards have been found at Hatfield Broad Oak, at Shoebury, and at other places in the county. The bronze implements are of many kinds. The celt or axe was still the most characteristic weapon ; no less than fifty celts were found, some time ago, close together on Hog Hill in Hainault Forest. In addition, swords, hammers, handles, and a great variety of other implements have been discovered. These bronze articles are often beautifully made and decorated.

It is believed that the men of the Bronze Age were invaders who came to our island from the Continent. They were perhaps of Keltic race and drove the less well-armed men of the Stone Age out of the best parts of the island, just as the men of their own race were afterwards driven into the mountains of the west and north by the invaders of the Old English race—the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes. There can be no certainty as to the time when the men of the Bronze Age came to our land, but it is believed, by writers who have given much study to the subject, to have been somewhere about 1400 B.C.

The Bronze Age lasted in England a thousand years or so, and then another great advance in the material from which man fashioned his chief implements took place, and the Iron Age began. Few articles of the Early Iron Age remain, because iron, though the most useful of all metals, is also one of the most perishable. In the course of years it becomes deeply eaten into by the

action of moisture, and most ancient iron has long ago crumbled away into rust.

The Early Iron Age brings us comparatively near to the dawn of written history in our land. However carefully we may study the weapons of the river gravels or the barrows, we can learn but very little from them of the peoples by whose hands they were fashioned. But we have now approached a time when civilized man began to visit our island, and some of these visitors have left behind them written records of what they saw, and some account of the people who dwelt in the land. Before we deal with the dawn of written history, we may, however, consider some remains of early man in our county, the age and purpose of which it is difficult to determine.

CHAPTER IV

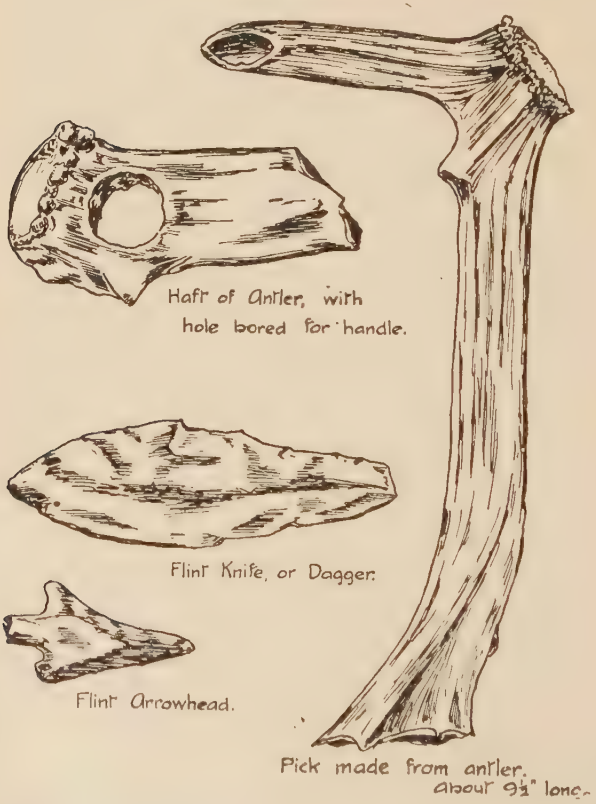
SOME WORKS OF EARLY MAN IN ESSEX

THERE are several remains in Essex which are certainly very ancient and which, in some cases, appear to date from a time long before the dawn of written history. The most interesting of these are a supposed lake-dwelling at Skitt's Hill, near Braintree, numerous mounds and patches of burnt earth known as the Red Hills, and the very curious pits called Deneholes.

We know that, in the Stone and Early Bronze Ages, primitive man sometimes sought protection from his numerous enemies by building his dwellings upon stakes or piles driven into the beds of shallow lakes or ponds. A number of these lake-dwellings have been found and explored, particularly in some of the Swiss lakes.

Now it seems from the relics found at Skitt's Hill,

many of which are to be seen in the West Ham Museum, that one of these ancient dwellings, probably a collection of wattle huts built upon piles or bundles of stakes, once



Remains from Skitt's Hill (West Ham Museum)

existed there. One of the stakes, weathered and worn by centuries, but evidently pointed for driving into the ground, is shown in the Museum.

A number of antlers and flint flakes and implements,

found in what is known as the relic-bed, are also to be seen in the Museum. This bed lies from eight to ten feet below the present surface of the ground. One of the remains found in it was the skull of a deer with the antlers *sawn* off. We are naturally curious to know why they were sawn off, and possibly other specimens in the Museum supply the reason, for some of the antlers could well be used as picks. Other antlers found had holes drilled in them, so that handles could be fixed to them. Among the other finds in this bed was a beautifully made arrow-head and a flint knife or dagger. These remains are, of course, of the Later Stone Age.

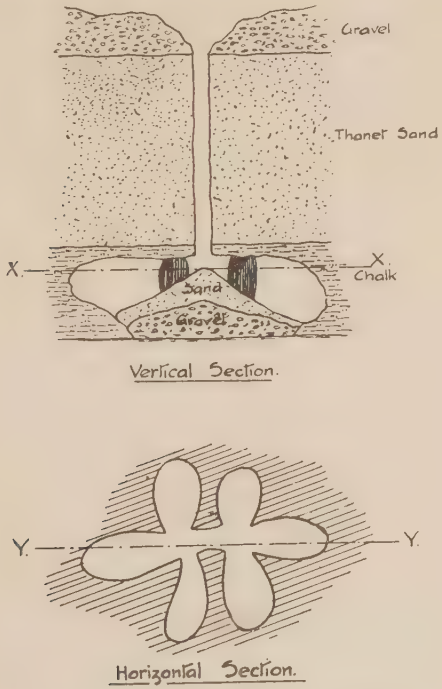
Another remarkable evidence of the work of early man in Essex is found in the so-called Red Hills. These are very numerous in the county and are not really hills at all, but merely mounds or levelled patches of earth of the red colour which is produced by burning the soil. They vary from a quarter of an acre to fifteen or even twenty acres in area, and many of them must contain tens of thousands of tons of burnt earth.

It is an interesting task to account for the burning of soil upon such a vast scale. We shall be helped to form a probable conclusion by two facts. The first is, that mixed with the burnt earth are great numbers of fragments of a very crude, rough pottery. This pottery was evidently shaped by hand, not turned on the potter's wheel, a fact which points to its being of very early date. Moreover, this rough pottery was made on the spot, for among the fragments of earthen vessels are found a number of pieces shaped like wedges. Now these wedge-shaped pieces are similar in shape to pieces that are used, even at the present day, in the manufacture of pottery. You will be convinced of this if you compare specimens from the Red Hills with specimens from a modern potter's works in the cases at the West Ham Museum. Probably,

then, the great quantity of burnt earth results from the firing of the earthenware vessels in rough kilns of earth. The next fact to be noticed is that the Red Hills are always close to salt water. They are especially numerous round the mouths of the Crouch, Colne, and Blackwater. Not only are they near to salt water, but, generally, they are as near to it as possible, being, indeed, only just above high-water level. This points to salt water being in some way connected with the purpose of these ancient pottery works. We therefore come to the probable conclusion that salt water was evaporated in the rude earthenware vessels for the sake of the salt it contained. We know that many primitive peoples will take great trouble and will, indeed, undergo great dangers and difficulties in order to obtain supplies of salt. The most probable explanation of the origin of the Red Hills, then, seems to be that they are the remains of ancient salt-works where the pottery used in the process was also made. How ancient they are we cannot say, though the rudeness of the pottery appears to point to a very early date. It is true that, comparatively rarely, fragments of a much better pottery, probably of the time of the Romans in Essex, are also found, but these most likely have nothing to do with the period or original purpose of the Red Hills.

Of all the works of early man in Essex, however, none are more mysterious in origin or purpose than the wonderful shafts or excavations in Hangman's Wood, near Grays, in the southern part of the county. These are known as the Deneholes. They are numerous shafts sunk some fifty or sixty feet through beds of Thanet Sand to the underlying chalk. At the bottom they branch out into a number of chambers excavated in the chalk and radiating, as shown in the plan, from the central shaft.

What was the object of these extraordinary pits? Some have suggested that they were made simply to get the chalk for agricultural purposes. This at first sight seems improbable, for chalk comes to the surface within



Sections of a Typical Denehole

a mile or so. Some recent writers on the subject, however, give examples of other places where pits are to-day used to supply chalk in preference to hauling it even short distances from places where it comes to the surface. Some have supposed that the pits were, as the name seems to suggest, places of refuge from the ravaging

Danes ; others that they were granaries and storehouses. We cannot, however, at present decide the purpose for which they were made with anything like certainty. At the bottom of each shaft a mound of earth, formed of soil and other material which has dropped or been washed into the pit, has collected. Some of these mounds have been carefully examined, and bones of man, the horse, of dogs or wolves, and of other creatures have been found. Probably, however, these have nothing to do with the purpose or age of the Deneholes. Most likely they are the remains of hapless horsemen or beasts to whom the open pits in the darkness of the wood have proved death-traps. So also with metal implements and other things that have been found ; their presence may be merely accidental.

More significant, however, may be the finding of pieces of hard stone, which does not occur locally, and which is of a kind known to have been anciently used for mill-stones. This is a strong point in favour of the opinion that the Deneholes were ancient granaries.

One point seems to show clearly that the excavations are of later date than the Stone Age. On the walls of the chambers in the chalk are found marks evidently made by the use of the pick. These are so sharply and clearly shaped that it is natural to conclude they were made by a *metal* pick. Probably, therefore, these curious pits were made, perhaps at different times, at some date later than the Stone Age. They *may* have been sunk merely for the purpose of obtaining chalk, or they *may* have been ancient granaries ; but we cannot be sure that the riddle of the purpose for which they were made has yet been solved.

CHAPTER V

BEFORE THE COMING OF THE ROMANS

The Keltic dwellers in our land, whom we generally call the Ancient Britons, first came into contact with people of higher civilization through the visits of the ancient traders and sailors, called the Phoenicians. These early navigators discovered that the south-west portion of the island produced great stores of tin, a metal which was especially valuable in those days because bronze, the metal which was then in common use, is a mixture of copper and tin.

The knowledge of these supplies of tin was so valuable that for a long time the Phoenicians kept their discovery a secret. At length, however, the Greeks found it out, and they too began to trade with the island. Moreover, intercourse sprang up between the Britons and their kinsfolk who dwelt in Gaul, the land we now call France.

The visits of these more highly civilized traders were bound to have a civilizing effect upon the Britons. Better modes of dress and living, better tools and better craftsmanship came within their knowledge, and with the knowledge came the desire for imitation. But this early civilization was almost entirely confined to the parts of Britain which the strangers visited, and hence the people of the southern parts of the island were more civilized than those of the midlands or of the north.

To-day, communication is so rapid and easy that any advance in one part of our country is immediately shared in by all other parts. But, if we think a little of the condition of Britain in early times, we shall readily understand how it was that progress then spread very slowly.

In those days communication was very slow, very difficult, and often very dangerous. This arose partly from the fact that the people of Britain belonged, not to one nation, living in peace and friendship among themselves as they do now, but to many different tribes who were frequently engaged in deadly struggles with one another. Hence a man of South Britain might often be in peril of his life if he ventured far from his home and crossed the borders of a hostile tribe. Perhaps an even greater obstacle to communication lay in the character of the country itself. If we would understand what our land looked like in these old days, we must look out upon the countryside and try, in imagination, to banish from it nearly every trace of man's handiwork. Let us take our stand upon some hill-side or eminence with which we are familiar in our county of Essex. Though a poet tells us that "God made the country and man made the town", almost every square yard of land, even in the rural parts of an old country like ours, bears the mark of man's handiwork.

As we look out from the hill-top, we see below us the gleam of the white roads, the neatly fenced and furrowed fields, the drainage ditches that carry off surplus moisture to the channelled river, and a thousand signs of man's handiwork, apart from the houses or the church spires that peep through the sheltering trees.

But the Ancient Briton standing on the same spot, saw, so far as his view could pierce through the tangled mass of trees and bushes, a very different scene. True, the hill-side and the river, and the general *form* of the landscape were there, much as they are to-day, but nearly the whole was covered with a dense growth of forest and undergrowth through which ran the narrow tracks made by the hunters or by the wild animals which abounded in the thickets. In Essex we are fortunate in having the

remains of those ancient woodlands in the forests of Epping and Hainault, many of whose trees are, no doubt, the descendants of trees beneath which the Ancient Briton hunted the deer, the wild ox, and the boar. The river, too, now kept within due bounds and spanned by many bridges, was then fringed by wide marshes over which the stream spread its waters in flood after every storm. Across the river, the beaver here and there built his dams, blocking up the natural course of the stream, and sending the waters, in time of flood, pouring over and destroying tracts of wooded land. In the neighbourhood of Epping Forest we still find, in places, peat beds full of timber and containing the beaver's bones to mark his handiwork.

In such a land, a land of dense forests and wide-stretching morasses, scantily peopled by tribes at war one with the other, the early notions of civilization, which the peoples of Southern Britain acquired from their visitors from the Continent, spread slowly to the other parts of the island. Hence, at the coming of the Roman conquerors, while in the south there were the beginnings of civilization, these faded away till a condition of almost absolute savagery was to be found in the more remote parts of Britain. The district which now forms our county lay within the more civilized region.

CHAPTER VI

BRITISH REMAINS IN ESSEX

It is interesting to inquire whether any traces remain in our county of ancient British work made before the Roman Conquest. Apart from implements and tools which, in the early stages of culture, happen to have been made of such almost imperishable materials as flint or bronze, and the sepulchral mounds which his religion

taught him to raise over his honoured dead, the strongest and most permanent works made by early man are the embanked earthworks which he raised to serve as defences against his enemies.

Amidst the tangled thickets of the Essex of British days, there rose here and there the earthworks within which the people sheltered themselves from their enemies in times of trouble. How numerous they were none can say, for in a lowland county like our own, much of which has for centuries been under the plough, many of those which once existed must, in the process of time, have been destroyed. There are, however, many grass-grown or tree-covered earthworks and embankments in Essex, which are evidently very ancient. How are we to decide whether they are British or whether they belong to some other period? The shape helps us somewhat. Are they square in shape as the Roman camp or castra generally was? Are they like the moated works surrounding a castle of the Middle Ages? These are questions to be answered from examination of the surface. But the most decisive answers are to be obtained by digging a cutting or section through the earthwork itself and carefully examining every spadeful of earth turned up. If, in so doing, we find tools and implements known to have been in use earlier than the time of the Roman occupation of our country, while, on the other hand, we find no trace of Roman or of later craftsmanship, it is reasonable to conclude that the earthwork is of earlier date than the Roman Conquest of Britain.

Now this test has been applied to several of the earthworks in Essex. In the heart of Epping Forest, beside a track known as the Earl's Path, which leads from Loughton to High Beech, there is an ancient embankment. It is an irregular oval in shape, and is generally known as Loughton Camp. This earthwork occupies perhaps

the best defensive position in the whole of the forest. It stands upon the southern headland of an elevated ridge, overlooking the marshy valley called Debden Slade, a hundred feet below, and having sides sloping steeply down in most directions. In 1882, the Essex Field Club made cuttings through the earthwork and, in the material of the work itself, found worked flint flakes, a celt, and fragments of ancient pottery, but no trace of Roman craftsmanship. The earthwork is, therefore, in all probability earlier in origin than the time of the Roman occupation of Britain. Within the area of eleven or twelve acres enclosed by the defensive works are a number of pits, many of which are circular in form. These are supposed by some to be pit-dwellings, but others consider them to be merely excavations made to obtain sand for the plaster with which the British occupants of the fortress covered their wattle-and-daub huts. The strength of the position was increased by a deep ditch around the rampart.

Also in the Forest, about a mile to the south of the town of Epping, and close to the high road from London to that town, stands the ancient camp known as Ambresbury Banks. Local tradition connects this fortress with the unfortunate Queen Boadicea, but the tradition rests on no trustworthy evidence. The camp is of greater extent than the one at Loughton. Sections cut through the rampart show that the work itself was, when it was made, probably some ten feet in height and that it was surrounded by a V-shaped ditch of about the same depth. As a result of the examination of the earthwork and the sections, a great authority upon the subject decided that the fortress was of British construction. The chief reasons for this conclusion are, first, that the earthwork follows the natural irregularities of the ground instead of being of the regular shape adopted

by the Roman engineers in building their camps, and secondly, that no Roman remains were found in the material of the rampart itself nor upon the ancient surface-line of the ground on which it stands. The remains found included a number of flint chips and some fragments of rude pottery.

Ambresbury Banks, therefore, are, we may conclude, British in origin. Probably they were made at a later time than Loughton Camp, but there is nothing to show whether they were constructed before or during the Roman occupation. Nor can we decide whether the popular tradition which connects the earthwork with the rising of Boadicea against the Roman conquerors be true or not.

Another ancient earthwork, which is probably Keltic in origin, is the rampart known as Gryme's Dyke near Colchester. Though many Roman remains have been found near the Dyke, none have been discovered in or under it, although large parts of the rampart have been levelled during recent years.

At Great Hallesbury, there is an ancient earthwork which closely resembles Loughton Camp in form. It is known as Wallbury Camp and, for reasons similar to those which we have given in regard to the other earthworks, it is generally believed to be also pre-Roman in origin.

CHAPTER VII

THE COMING OF THE ROMANS

The first written information which we have regarding that part of our country, which in later years came to be known as Essex, is to be found in the writings of the great Roman general and statesman, Julius Caesar.

One of the greatest exploits of Caesar was the conquest of Gaul, whose people had been aided in their resistance to the Roman legions by their kinsfolk who dwelt in Southern Britain. Caesar, therefore, resolved to add to the fame of his victories by an invasion of Britain, an island of almost romantic interest to the Romans because it was situated on the uttermost limits of the world as understood by them.

It was, however, not during Caesar's first brief invasion of Britain in 55 B. C., but during the following year, 54 B. C., that he came into touch with the part of the country we now call Essex. This district was, in Caesar's time, occupied by one of the strongest of the tribes of South Britain, the Trinobantes, whose chief stronghold was at Camulodunum, the present Colchester. The king of this tribe—called King Lud in the legendary history of Geoffrey of Monmouth—had, we are told, been killed in a struggle with his brother Cassivelaunus, the prince of a neighbouring tribe. After his victory, Cassivelaunus became king of the Trinobantes, and the son of the conquered ruler is said to have fled from Britain into Gaul and sought the aid of Caesar.

His complaints served, we are further told, as an excuse for Caesar's second invasion, though probably little excuse was needed by the Roman general. The addition of the conquest of Britain to his victories in Gaul would have meant to him the carrying of the Roman eagles to the uttermost limits of the world, and as a result the certainty of his triumph in the struggle for the mastery of Rome, at that time the mistress of the world.

Certainly Caesar again led his legions from Gaul. He landed in Kent and, traversing the land through which he had marched the year before, forded the Thames and led his army into the land of the Trinobantes. In the battles which followed, the native courage of the Britons

was no match for the better discipline and weapons of the seasoned Roman legions, and Cassivelaunus was forced to submit. A doubtful tribute was imposed upon the British, but Caesar left the country with no real conquest effected. His invasions, however, were important because they directed the attention of the Romans to the distant island, and therefore prepared the way for the conquest which was not completed till more than a century later. Moreover, they furnish us with the first important information as to the country and its inhabitants.

At this time the Britons of the south were, for the reasons we have already mentioned, more civilized than those of the northern parts. They had advanced a long way beyond the stage of mere hunters and fishers, for Caesar tells us that they grew large quantities of corn, and kept domestic animals. Their skill in driving their war-chariots, from whose axles great scythe-like knives projected, was remarkable. Though they were acquainted with the use of iron, their weapons, which they used with great natural courage, were generally of bronze, and for defensive weapons they carried shields, and wore armour on their throats and right arms.

Though most of the Britons were clad in skins, they were acquainted with the arts of spinning and weaving, they made pottery, and they had a system of coinage, probably imitated from the coins introduced into the country by foreign traders.

The use of coins points to a fairly advanced state of culture, and is proved, beyond possibility of doubt, by the fact that very many have been found buried in the earth. In Essex these discoveries of British coins have been especially numerous, and many of them are to be seen in the British Museum and other collections. Colchester and its neighbourhood have yielded many

examples of these coins, and their number tends to confirm the belief that the town stands upon the site of the ancient Camulodunum.

Many of these coins bear the name of Cunobeline or Cunobilin—the name is found spelt in both ways—or a part of the name, and bear a head in relief, a curiously shaped horse, and other designs. Bronze, silver, and gold coins have been found. This King Cunobeline is the Cymbeline who gives his name to one of Shakespeare's plays. He reigned over this part of Britain during a portion of the time that elapsed between the invasion by Caesar and the beginning of the real conquest of South Britain. He died probably about A. D. 42, a year before that conquest began. Cunobeline seems to have cultivated the friendship of Rome and to have paid tribute regularly to the Emperors. Nevertheless, during the long period between Caesar's invasion in 54 B. C. and A. D. 43, more than one of the Roman Emperors planned the conquest of Britain. One of them indeed, the monstrously wicked and half-mad Emperor Caligula, advanced to the Gaulish shore of the Channel, drew up his army on the beach, caused his trumpets to sound the attack, and then, ordering his soldiers to fill their helmets with shells, returned to Rome laden with these "spoils of the sea", and celebrated a great triumph on his conquest of the ocean!

But a far more serious attack upon the independence of Britain began in the reign of the next emperor, Claudius. In A. D. 43, that emperor, influenced partly by traitor Britons who had been driven into exile, sent an army under Aulus Plautius, one of his generals, to effect the conquest of Britain.

Claudius himself made a very brief campaign in the island, captured Camulodunum and founded a colony—*colonia*—of veteran soldiers there. The fact that Camulodunum was especially the object of the emperor's attack,

coupled with the numerous British relics which have been found on its site, points to the great importance of the town in pre-Roman times, and the ancient town was the first in order of foundation of the Roman towns in Britain. This "colonia" of Claudius was the beginning of the Roman town of Colchester. With the capture of Camulodunum, the conquest of our part of the island may be regarded as effected, though, as we shall see, a great uprising afterwards threatened the entire destruction of the Roman power. But in other parts of the island resistance on the part of the British went on much longer. Possibly, in the territories of Cunobeline, the people had to some extent been brought under Romanizing influences during that king's reign.

One of the most famous of the warriors who struggled against the Romans, Caractacus, was a son of Cunobeline. His exploits, however, took place far beyond the borders of our county, and do not, therefore, belong to the history of Essex.

The conquest of Claudius was not endured without a desperate and, indeed, well-nigh successful effort on the part of the British in Eastern Britain to recover their independence. The rising burst into flame through the cruelty and injustice of the Roman conquerors. To the north of the Trinobantes, in the district now occupied by the counties of Norfolk and Suffolk, dwelt the British tribe of the Iceni. The last king of this tribe appears to have been left, during the early years of the Roman Conquest, with some shadow of his power as a kind of subject-king. He hoped to appease the Romans, and to preserve some part of his possessions for his family, by naming the emperor as co-heir with his two daughters.

But on his death, his will was entirely set at naught. Not only were his possessions seized, but his wife Boadicea was brutally scourged and her daughters foully treated.

The smouldering anger of the Iceni against their conquerors burst into flame at these outrages and, headed by Boadicea, they took the field. The Trinobantes joined them and the whole of Eastern Britain united in a desperate attempt to throw off the Roman yoke.

The moment was well chosen. The forces of Rome were at the time under the command of a general named Suetonius Paulinus. With the bulk of his army that general had undertaken a great expedition against the priests or Druids in the sacred island of Mona (Anglesey). The chief Roman station in Eastern Britain, Colchester, was consequently left with but a weak garrison.

For a time, the numbers and the fury of the revolted Britons triumphed completely over the enfeebled resistance of the Roman garrisons. First Colchester fell, then London, and then Verulam (St. Albans). The Roman works were destroyed, the garrisons put to the sword and the Roman power in Eastern Britain was for a while extinguished in blood. So dire was the vengeance of the British that seventy thousand Romans, it is said, were slain.

But the energy and ability of Suetonius Paulinus were equal to the desperate state of affairs. Hurrying back through Central Britain, he reached London and, with an army of ten thousand Romans, set out to meet the vast forces of Boadicea, which are said to have numbered over two hundred thousand men. The armies met somewhere between London and Colchester, possibly at Messing, quite near to the latter town, possibly at Ambresbury Banks.

Neither the numbers nor the courage of the Britons nor the exhortations of Boadicea, who rode in her war-chariot among their ranks, availed against the discipline and valour of the Roman legions. The Britons suffered a bloody defeat, and eighty thousand are said to have been

killed, while the Roman loss was comparatively trifling. The unhappy Boadicea, in despair, poisoned herself after the battle, to avoid the shame of falling into the hands of the Romans.

After the defeat and death of "the British warrior-queen", the rule of the Romans in Eastern Britain was never seriously threatened by the British. The Roman settlement was re-established at Colchester, the Roman buildings renewed or restored, and the whole was defended by a strong circuit of walls.

CHAPTER VIII

UNDER THE ROMANS. PART I

Though the conquest of this part of Britain was finally completed by the crushing defeat of the army of Boadicea, it was not until some time later that Britain, south of the mountains which we call the Scottish Highlands, was entirely subdued.

The wild, sterile heaths and moorlands of the north offered little inducement to the Romans to undertake the difficult task of reducing their savage inhabitants to complete subjection. The Romans therefore contented themselves with building fortified walls across the narrow parts of the island to keep the Picts who dwelt in the north from sweeping down upon the more fertile southern parts of Britain.

These southern parts they ruled as a conquered country. At some places, as at Colchester, they planted "colonies", but they were not colonies in the sense in which we use the word when we speak of the British colonies in Canada or Australia. The rule of the Romans was military, something like that of the British in India.

At various strong places they planted fortified camps and, to enable their legions to march rapidly from one of these to another, they built good roads to connect them.

The Romans were the first great engineers, the first great road-makers and bridge-builders. The most striking feature of the Roman roads was their straightness. The Roman engineer drove his road in an almost direct line from point to point, up hill and down dale, across marshes on raised causeways, over rivers by bridges, or through them at paved fords.

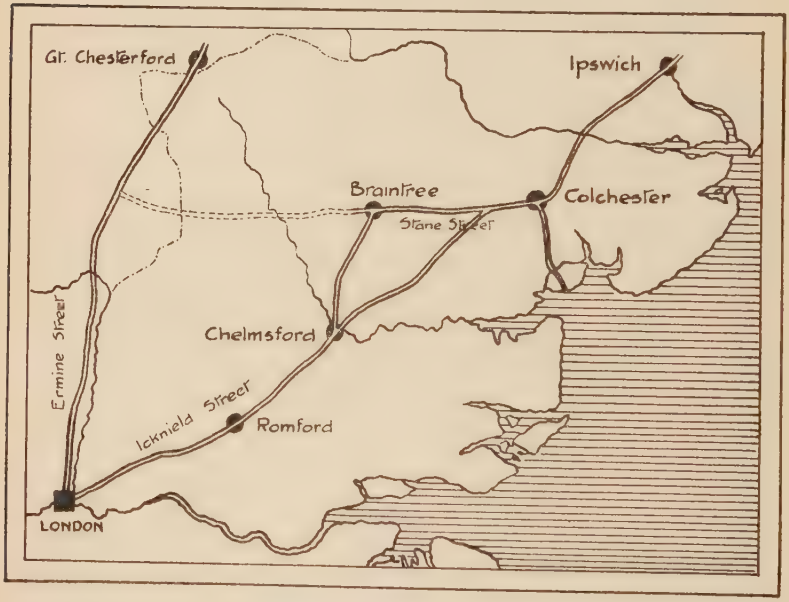
Even to-day we may often trace the course of these old Roman ways. In our own district by far the most important of these was the great road which connected Augusta—the London of the Romans—with the Roman station at Colchester. This road crossed the Lea at Old Ford, passed over the Leyton marshes to Stratford, and thence followed much the same course as the present Romford Road through Ilford to Romford, and so on through Ingatestone and Chelmsford to Colchester and beyond. This great road, later known as Icknield Street, has ever since Roman times been the chief route from London to the eastern counties.

Another important road ran along the western borders of the present county of Essex on its way from London to Cambridge. These two great highways were connected by another which ran right across country, from Colchester on the one road to Bishop's Stortford on the other. At intervals along the roads fortified stations or military camps were placed.

Throughout the Roman occupation, Colchester continued to be by far the most important town in the part of the country now forming Essex. Its great importance is shown by the multitude of Roman antiquities that have been found in the town and its neighbourhood. The Roman town was, in shape, an irregular oblong, defended

by a massive wall some eight feet or more in thickness. Parts of this wall stand to this day, and appear likely to stand, firm and strong, for many ages to come.

If we examine this wall we find that it is built, partly of shaped stones, and partly of Roman bricks. These "bricks" are more like tiles than the bricks we make



Roman Roads in Essex

to-day. Those in the wall of Colchester are generally about 18 inches long, 11 inches broad, and 2 inches thick. The art of brick-making was probably brought to this country by the Romans, and these flat, tile-like bricks are very characteristic of their work. We must not, however, for a moment suppose that every building containing Roman bricks was built by the Romans. In later years the

ruins of many old Roman buildings were looked upon as convenient stores of building material, and the bricks were taken away to help in the making of much later structures. Thus in the walls of Colchester castle and

The Town Wall, Colchester

of some of the old churches in the county, indeed in the walls of no less than thirty-five Essex churches, many Roman bricks are found. Within the circuit of the walls, the Romans built their houses, their temples, their theatres, and their baths. The chief traces of these which we find in Colchester to-day are the tesselated

pavements which formed the floors of the Roman buildings. These floors were made of small cube-shaped stones set in a hard cement and arranged to form designs of

Roman Guard-room, Colchester

various kinds. Portions of these tesselated pavements have been very frequently found in Colchester, the stones being often of different colours and the designs of great beauty.

Not only did the Romans build roads and cities in our land, but they also—or more probably the Britons under their direction—cut down large portions of the forest and brought the land under the plough. Thus this district became, what for long centuries it continued to be, one of the chief corn-growing districts of the country.

In another direction the Romans began a very important work. As we have seen, there extends along the northern shore of the Thames a broad belt of low-lying land. In its natural condition this is but a useless marsh, liable to be overflowed by every high tide. Embanked and drained, however, it forms excellent grazing land upon which large numbers of beasts may be kept. Traces of Roman work have been found in these embankments, and many parts of the great mushroom towns of West and East Ham are built upon land probably originally won from the river by the Roman engineers. It has been suggested that an encampment at Uphall, between Ilford and Barking, was made to hold a body of British labourers who, under the guard of Roman soldiers, were forced to work on the embankment of the river.

PART II

But it is not merely in the great works of the engineer or builder that the Romans have left to this day signs of their presence. Very frequently in our country, men engaged in digging the foundations of buildings or in other excavating work, find the urns in which the Romans placed the ashes of their dead, Roman coffins of stone, fragments large and small of their domestic pottery, bowls and vessels of bronze, metal implements and ornaments, and coins in great numbers. Roman remains of one kind or another have been found in over one hundred and fifty Essex parishes.

The number of coins that have been found in and about

Colchester is especially remarkable. Morant, who wrote the most famous of the old histories of Essex in the year 1768, says that bushels had, to his knowledge, been found. The mere list of the different *kinds* of coins and their inscriptions fills seven folio pages in his book. We know, too, that Colchester was one of the two towns of Roman Britain—London was the other—which had the privilege of making coins. That is, it was one of the two Roman mints in Britain. If we find on a Roman coin—in a museum or elsewhere—the letters C or CL, we may conclude that it was made in the Roman town of Colchester. These coins recall many a strange scene of those far-off times. They tell of the workmen toiling in the mint, while outside we may see in imagination the paved streets sounding under the tread of the Roman soldiers going to change guard upon the wall, the gleam of their armour as they march down to the gates, and in fancy we may hear the murmur of the idle people in the baths and the applause of the spectators in the theatre. Through the hands of those long-dead workmen and soldiers and citizens those little coins passed, to be lost by some careless or unfortunate Roman or Briton, and to lie buried in the ground until some fortunate accident brought them again to light.

At numerous places in this district besides Colchester, Roman coins have been found; at Leyton and Saffron Walden, for example, and the number of these finds tends to show how thoroughly the district was occupied and Romanized.

The finds of Roman pottery, too, have been very numerous. The best of this pottery is red or black in colour, is ornamented with various designs and is finely glazed. This is known as Samian ware and very probably was imported into Britain from the Continent. But some pottery was certainly made in Britain itself,

for, in 1877, a Roman pottery kiln was found and uncovered at Colchester Marsh. Here, probably, were made the lamps, toys, and little figures of baked clay, many of which have been found in the town.

Some time during the Roman occupation, Christianity was introduced and was generally accepted in the more civilized parts of the island. According to some legends St. Paul himself visited Britain, while according to others, Joseph of Arimathea came to Glastonbury in Somerset, bringing with him the Holy Grail, or vessel from which Christ partook of the Last Supper. It is, however, more probable that the Christian faith was introduced by some of the Roman soldiers who had adopted it.

You will have noticed in the beginning of this chapter the mention of the discovery of Roman sepulchral *urns* and also of Roman *coffins*. The change in the manner of the disposal of the dead marks a change of faith. Before they became Christians, the Romans of the time of the Empire almost universally burnt or cremated the bodies of the dead and enclosed the ashes in sepulchral urns. After they became Christians, however, this custom grew repugnant to them, and they adopted the practice of burying their dead, generally in stone coffins. The urns, therefore, probably contained the remains of Romans who worshipped Jupiter, Venus, and the other gods of the old Roman religion, while in the coffins were buried Christian Romans or Britons. Urns containing the ashes of cremated Romans have frequently been discovered. One found at Colchester was a great vessel of clay containing within it a smaller urn of black earth. In the latter were a quantity of ashes, the remains, no doubt of some Roman lady who died long ago in the town, for the urn also contained a mirror of polished metal, two lamps, and two small bottles.

Roman urns have also been found at Chigwell. Indeed,

the district near that village has yielded a considerable number of Roman remains, including nails, urns, cups, and glass vessels. A leaden coffin was also found similar to some that were found in East Ham. In the latter place a stone coffin was also found.

The Colchester Sphinx

Some discoveries of Roman statues or figures have been made at Colchester. One of these is an effigy of a centurion or officer of the XXth Legion. But the most remarkable was a sphinx ; a creature, half winged-woman, half beast, represented as crouching over the

remains of a man she had slain. A figure of the god Mercury has also been found, and some fragments of what was probably a small statue of Venus.

These two figures remind us again that, though the Roman Conquest happened in the early part of the Christian era, the Romans at the time of the Conquest were not Christians. Some people believe that they have found evidences of the site of a heathen Roman temple in Colchester. No doubt more than one existed there in the early days of the Conquest.

Most of the old Essex historians claim that the first Christian Roman Emperor, Constantine the Great, was born at Colchester. The statement, however, is not accepted by many great authorities as a fact. According to the story of the *Colchester Chronicle*, the Roman General in Britain besieged the rebellious governor of the district, Coel, in Colchester. The general himself, however, fell in love with the daughter of Coel, Helena, and married her. Their son, Constantine, the story goes on to say, was born at Colchester. But the birthplace, not only of Constantine but of Helena herself, is a matter of dispute. Though we should certainly like to claim the great emperor and his pious mother as natives of our county, we must admit that the evidence in favour of that view is far from conclusive. After her death, Helena was made a Saint of the Church, and is therefore known as St. Helena. Her figure appears on the ancient seal of the town of Colchester, in which she is represented holding a cross. The cross is there, not only because she was a Christian, but also because we are told that, late in life, she made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and discovered the three crosses upon which Christ and the two thieves were crucified.

Some very remarkable mounds in the parish of Ashdon, in Essex, date from the time of the Romans in our county.

These are called the Bartlow Hills. They originally consisted of a row of four great mounds of earth, the largest of which was forty-two feet in height, with another row of smaller mounds running parallel with the first. These have now been very much damaged by the plough and by the Great Eastern Railway. Fortunately, however, they were carefully examined before that happened, and, in every case, they were found to be burial mounds containing remains of Roman times.

Cremated remains were found in chambers within the mounds, and a great number of objects, some of which are preserved in Saffron Walden Museum, were discovered. These objects included a number of vessels of glass and bronze, a gold ring, and a brass coin of the Emperor Hadrian. There was also an especial treasure in the form of a globe-shaped vessel of bronze, beautifully enamelled in red, green, and blue.

It is of course evident that such great burial mounds were raised over the remains of people of much importance. It is also more likely that they would be raised by Britons, after the manner of their race, than by Romans. It therefore appears probable that, during the time when the Romans held sway, some of the old British stock were allowed to hold positions of considerable importance in the land.

CHAPTER IX

THE COMING OF THE EAST SAXONS

The years of the Roman dominion in Britain were, in general, years of peace for the Britons. Just as Britain to-day imposes the *Pax Britannica* upon India and prevents the different and often hostile peoples of that country from warring with one another as they formerly

The Bartlow Hills in the Eighteenth Century

did, so Rome imposed the *Pax Romana* upon Britain. She put down the warfare between the different tribes of the Britons and took upon herself the burden of their defence from enemies who came from regions beyond the limits of the Roman province.

Many of the youth of Britain passed indeed into the Imperial armies. These British soldiers, however, were not allowed to garrison the stations in their native land, but were drafted off to defend distant provinces of the Empire. Similarly the garrisons of Colchester and the other Roman stations were composed of soldiers quite alien from the Britons among whom they dwelt and whom they kept in obedience to Rome.

The Roman army was not without employment in its task of defending Britain from outside foes. The strong wall built from the Tyne to the Solway Firth, and the garrison which guarded it, did not always suffice to hold in check the fierce tribes of the north, the Picts as they are generally called. These barbarians sometimes poured over the rampart and carried pillage and devastation into Roman Britain.

Much more important in result than the plundering incursions of the Picts were, however, the attacks which came from another quarter. Across the North Sea came bands of sea-rovers, who sailed their boats up the rivers and creeks of the eastern and southern coasts. Landing and leaving their ships under a guard, they slew and plundered until the approach of a body of Roman soldiers, sufficiently powerful to overawe them, drove them back to their ships. These plunderers came from the German and Danish shores of the North Sea and were the Old English peoples, the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes.

The district which we now call Essex must have been especially exposed to their attacks. Not only does it front the North Sea, but its numerous creeks and estuaries

were especially well suited to the methods of the sea-rovers. Probably the military importance of Colchester, after the Britons themselves no longer offered any resistance to Rome, lay in its favourable position for repelling the attacks of the plundering German tribes. If you look at the map, you will see that Colchester is within a day's marching distance of a long line of coast and of river estuaries.

But the Romans did not depend for the defence of the coast entirely upon their inland garrisons. An officer, called the Count of the Saxon Shore, was charged with the task of preventing and repelling the inroads of sea-rovers, and, for this purpose, his fleets patrolled the waters of the coast. An important station of the Count of the Saxon Shore was situated in Mersea Isle. It was connected with Colchester by a road that ran by means of a causeway across the creeks and tidal waters that separate Mersea from the mainland. The present road called the Strood is this old Roman way. So long as the Roman power remained strong, its soldiers were able to prevent more than temporary damage being done by the raids of the Old English. But the strength of Rome gradually decayed.

The attacks of our Saxon forefathers upon the coasts of Britain were only one part of a great movement of the peoples of Europe. The Roman Empire was overrun by Teutonic tribes who had been disturbed in Northern Europe by the migration of the Huns under Attila. All along its frontiers Rome was engaged in war, and, in A. D. 410, the Roman legions left Britain because Rome could no longer hold and defend so distant a part of the Empire. The Britons, now civilized but unused to war, were left to shift for themselves.

A time of hideous ruin, slaughter, and confusion followed. Hordes of the northern Pictish savages poured

over the broken and deserted Roman wall; hordes of pirates, of the kindred tribes of the Jutes, Saxons, and Angles, landed on the eastern and southern coasts, and marked the trails of their marches in blood and fire. This state of anarchy lasted for a long period of years. We have but scanty records of the events which took place during this time. Kent was the first conquest of the strangers, falling into the power of Jutish tribes, who conquered it about the middle of the fifth century after the birth of Christ. In the sixth century, bodies of Saxons seized upon the district, part of which forms our county, and, to distinguish it from other conquests of Saxon tribes, such as Sussex and Wessex, it was called Essex, or the land of the East Saxons.

Thus Essex first appears in history, not as a county but as one of a number of rival kingdoms which the invaders founded. Its boundaries were more extensive than the limits of the present county, and its most important town was not Colchester, but London. Thus the early history of the English town of London is bound up with the history of Essex.

The English conquest of Britain was not merely a conquest ; it was also a colonization. Great numbers of the Britons were slain or driven into the wilds of the west and north. Others perhaps were allowed to live among their conquerors as slaves. In any case, however, their lands were occupied by the English, who brought with them their wives and children. The Roman civilization was destroyed. The towns were plundered and then probably left deserted by the English, who loved the free air and life of the country, and who settled down to till the soil in villages built around the common land. They brought with them their own customs, laws, and religion.

In our part of England, which was exposed to the first fury of the invasion, the Britons who lived in the

open and cultivated districts were probably almost, if not quite, exterminated, for the names of places in Essex are almost all pure English. Now, where a conquering race lives among a considerable remnant of the conquered people, the conquerors generally continue to use many of the old place-names. Thus, in the United States of America, many Indian names, such as Mississippi, Minnesota, and scores of others are retained. Possibly, however, some remnants of the British survived the first fury of the conquest as hunted and despised wanderers in the depths of the forests of Essex and Middlesex. In support of this view it has been pointed out that Essex people, as a rule, are darker than their neighbours of Suffolk and Norfolk.

Like all the ancient Germanic peoples, the Old English were heathens, worshipping many gods, such as Thor, the god of the upper air, and Woden, the god of war. They were a people of high courage and, as their descendants have ever been, marked by a great love of freedom.

The little kingdom of Essex never took a very high place among the warring states that the Old English founded. It is said to have been founded in 527, by Erkenwine, but it was not until 568 that London was taken from the British, and the kingdom of Essex reached its fullest extent by the inclusion of Middlesex and Hertfordshire. Possibly, London had been defended so long by the aid of the marshes which bordered it on all sides, except where the dense forest of Middlesex shut it in.

In succession, the three great kingdoms of Northumbria, Mercia, and Wessex strove to gain the mastery of the other English peoples. During this time Essex was sometimes independent, and sometimes under the overlordship of one or other of the rival states. Of this period we know very little. Fifteen kings of Essex are said to have reigned down to the year 823, when the little

kingdom was finally conquered by Egbert of Wessex, and ceased to have a separate existence apart from the rest of England.

CHAPTER X

HOW THE LIGHT CAME TO THE EAST SAXONS

During the dark ages of English history, one event stands out as of the first importance. This was the conversion of the English to Christianity and the substitution of the worship of the Prince of Peace for the heathen rites of the hero-gods, Woden and Thor. Apart from its religious importance, the conversion of the English was of vast consequence in bringing them into closer contact with the people of the Continent. For the first time the English entered into the religious fellowship of the peoples of Western Europe, and the civilizing effect of this fellowship soon made itself felt.

Christianity came into England through two main sources. In 597, St. Augustine, a missionary sent by Pope Gregory, landed in Kent, where he founded the see of Canterbury. But though Christianity had been banished from South Britain by the English Conquest, it had survived in Ireland, which produced a succession of saints and teachers during the time when heathen rites ruled in England. From Ireland, Christianity spread to Scotland, where St. Columba, who died in the very year of Augustine's landing, founded a great monastery at Iona in the Hebrides. From this centre Keltic missionaries spread the light of Christianity through Northumbria, and thence over a great part of England.

Christianity came into Essex through both these sources, Roman and Keltic. At the time of Augustine's ministry, there reigned in Essex King Sebert, a nephew of Ethelbert

the King of Kent, who was the most important of Augustine's converts. No doubt this relationship smoothed the way for the missionary Mellitus, whom Augustine sent to convert the East Saxons. So successful was Mellitus that King Sebert embraced the new faith and built the first Christian church in his capital, London.

But the people probably still clung to the faith of their forefathers. Indeed the sons of King Sebert had continued to worship their old hero-gods, and, on their father's death, they drove out the Christian teachers, and the heathen religion again reigned in the land.

The final triumph of the Cross in Essex came from the Keltic missionaries. The King of Northumbria, who was a Christian, persuaded King Sigeberht of Essex to be baptized. His persuasions were no doubt strengthened by the fact that he was the overlord of the East Saxon king. He also sent a great missionary, Cedd, to assist in the work, and to his preaching and teaching the final conversion of Essex was mainly due.

However, we must not suppose that the real conversion of our forefathers was sudden and complete. No doubt many in their hearts clung to the old beliefs, many relapsed into them in times of difficulty, and many others clothed their old heathen customs and superstitions in the forms of the new religion. We are told that in the reign of Sebb, the son of Sigeberht, a great pestilence smote the people of Essex. As is often the case with savage or slightly civilized peoples, they imagined that the plague was sent in anger by the old gods whom they had abandoned for the sake of the White Christ. So they tore down the wooden churches that had been built in honour of Christ and his saints, and set up again the altars of Thor and of Woden. But King Sebb, though his people fell away, stood steadfast in the faith, and gradually, by him

and his helpers, the people were brought back again to Christianity.

Though the conversion of Essex, like that of a great part of England, had been mainly brought about by Keltic missionaries, yet, fortunately, the whole of England finally entered into the Roman Church. This was important because the Church of Rome and the Keltic Church were at variance, indeed at enmity, upon some points. Entry into the Church of Rome brought England and Essex into a religious union with the whole of Western Europe, and the civilizing tendencies of this union made for progress. On the other hand, adherence to the Keltic Church would have tended to shut England off from the more advanced lands of the continent of Europe.

CHAPTER XI

THE EAST SAXONS AND LONDON

With the acceptance of the teachings of Christ, in at least outward form, the real civilization of the Old English begins. Human passions still beat high, pride and greed and evil feelings still swayed most hearts, war and bloodshed still devastated the land. But behind all these wickednesses, there abode in men's minds the feeling of something higher, something nobler, which they could not but reverence though they could not attain altogether to its height or its nobility. This reverence for things not seen, this influence of the gospel of love, tended to band them together and to make them more ready to work and to worship together. Also, it brought them into some touch of fellowship with the men of other lands, men speaking other tongues and born under other skies, but

akin in this—that they professed the faith of the same Lord and Saviour.

Hence the East Saxons, like others of their race, tended to become more social and to collect together with others of their fellows into towns and villages more than they had done at the time of their first settling in the land. Essex people may not unreasonably be proud of the fact that the greatest of all towns that the world has seen was founded by the old East Saxons.

London, the English London, which arose on the ruins of the old Roman Augusta, was an East Saxon town in origin, and lay within the borders of the old kingdom of Essex. Sir Walter Besant, the novelist and writer on the history of London, says: "The citizens of New London—Augusta having thus perished—were from the outset a mixed race. But the Saxons, and especially the East Saxons, prevailed. Strangely, it is Essex which has always prevailed in London."

To-day, London lies just outside the borders of the county, separated from it only by the narrow stream of the Lea, which we hardly notice as we rush over it in electric car or in motor omnibus. But the great city, which for a time was the chief town of the old Essex kingdom, is still the dominating fact in the life of the county. The big docks that have been dug on the Essex shores form part of the port of London; the vast factories and refineries standing on the reclaimed marshes of the Thames and the Lea are built there because London is near; the rows on rows of houses in West and East Ham, in Walthamstow and in Leyton, are but sleeping-places for men who earn their living in London and for those who depend upon them. For miles and miles, too, stretch the gardens and fields of those who live by the sale of the milk, the fruit, and the vegetables that they supply to the London markets.

Since the connexion between Essex and London is so

close, it is worth while to consider why the town grew up within the limits of the old kingdom of the East Saxons. We cannot, of course, follow in detail the later history of London. It did not, for any long space of time, continue to be, in any sense, a part of Essex, and its history is, to a large extent, the history of the English race.

London grew up and became a great town mainly because of its inland position at the head of the tidal waters of a great estuary. That estuary was the only considerable one facing the continent of Europe, with which the whole of the early commerce of our country was carried on. The tidal waters of the Thames sweeping up and down, in daily ebb and flow, carried ships well inland or out again seawards; while the reaches of the river beyond the ebb and flow of the tide gave a waterway for boats into the heart of the country.

But, since the tide flows well past London as far as Teddington, it may be asked why the town did not grow up farther to the westward so that vessels might get to the utmost the advantage of the help of the tide in bearing them in towards the heart of the country. The reason, no doubt, is to be found in the fact that while the water was deep as far as the old London, that is, roughly, up to the position of the present City of London, the river shallowed rapidly afterwards. Indeed, at Westminster, or Thorney, as that place was called before the West Church or West Minster was built by Edward the Confessor, the Thames was fordable. Hence the last deep water and good anchorage for ships, as they were borne up the river on the flood-tide, lay in the famous Pool of London just below London Bridge. From the Pool seawards, too, the river was wide enough and deep enough for the small sailing ships, of the Old English and of much later times, to beat up and down under their own sail, as you may see the

red-sailed barges of the Essex Stour or the Kentish Medway doing to-day.

Though London was not for long a part of Essex, it is important, in studying the history of the county, to notice how much that history has been affected by the fact that the great city lies just beyond the borders of the county. Many of the events in the history of Essex of which this book will tell, happened within the borders of our county, because of its nearness to the great city, and the prosperity of Essex has always largely depended upon the great City of London.

CHAPTER XII

THE COMING OF THE DANES

The conversion of the English to the religion of Christ did not bring peace to the land. Before and after that time, the different petty kingdoms that the English tribes had founded were engaged in a long and confused struggle for mastery. First Northumbria, then Mercia, and finally Wessex took the lead, and the kingdom of Essex passed from overlord to overlord as the fortune of war between the more powerful kingdoms decided. Even when Wessex had definitely established itself as the most powerful of the warring kingdoms, and when the foundations of the kingdom of England as a whole had been laid, a new danger threatened the very existence of the land. At intervals during several centuries the Danes, sea-rovers from across the North Sea, pillaged and sacked and burnt throughout the length and breadth of the country. The Danes, however, were a people kindred to the Old English; kindred in race, in speech, and in their heathen religion. In most respects indeed they resembled the heathen Old

English who had founded their kingdoms upon the ruins of the Roman province of Britain.

Like the Old English, too, the Danes tended to settle down in the parts of England that they overran, so that in some places, in the old kingdoms of Northumbria and East Anglia, and in parts of Mercia for instance, they became more numerous, or at any rate, more powerful, than the English. In Essex, matters were more evenly balanced and, for long years, the county was at intervals torn by the struggle between Englishman and Dane.

The position and the geography of Essex also brought it prominently into the conflict. Its low shores, seamed with tidal water-ways facing towards the North Sea, offered easy landing-places for the Danish rovers, while the broad waters of the Thames afforded a road into the heart of the country. Moreover, the fringing islands and nesses of the Essex coast and the islets in the rivers furnished positions which were already partly defended by the surrounding waters, and which could easily be further defended by earthworks.

Hence the Essex islands, such as Mersea Island, and the capes, such as Shoeburyness, became favourite wintering-places of the Danish pirates. There, behind their earthworks, they could shelter during the winter storms, living on the pillage they had gathered in their summer raids, and thence they could issue forth in the spring to carry blood and fire into a fresh region of the suffering land. Meanwhile, their ships rode at anchor beside their strongholds, and furnished means of retreat if disaster came upon the ravagers.

Essex first comes prominently into the story of the struggle between the English and the Danes during the reign of the wise and heroic Alfred, who alone among our kings bears the title of Great. It had, however, suffered severely before that time from their inroads, for we read

that in the reign of Ethelwulf, the father of Alfred, the Danes destroyed the town of London.

King Alfred's early conflicts with the Danes took place within the limits of his own kingdom of Wessex. There he suffered almost crushing disasters, and was forced to take refuge in the Isle of Athelney. Gathering strength, however, he fell upon the Danes and inflicted upon them such a defeat that they were glad to make terms.

The terms agreed upon between Alfred and the Danes divided the country into two parts. East and north of the old Roman road known as Watling Street, which ran from London to Chester—roughly, along the same route as that now followed by the main line of the London and North Western Railway—England was to be ruled by the Danes under their leader Guthrum. South and west of Watling Street, England was to remain English under the rule of Alfred. By this agreement Essex became part of the Danelagh, that is, the portion of England ruled by the Danes.

The treaty between Alfred and Guthrum gave England a period of comparative peace. Alfred, however, was wise enough to know that, even though the Danes who had settled east of Watling Street should faithfully observe the treaty, there were fresh hordes of Danes who might be expected to cross the seas in search of pillage and of land for settlements. The wisdom of Alfred is seen in the fact that he was the first Englishman to realize that the island kingdom was best defended upon the sea. If the Danes were suffered to land, even their defeat could not prevent them from inflicting much damage and misery upon the country, and Alfred therefore determined to defend his land upon the sea by building and manning a fleet. Thus there came into being the first English navy, though we must not fall into the error of supposing

that England has been powerful on the seas ever since that time.

Alfred soon found occupation for his new navy. One of the very first of the long and glorious series of sea-fights in our history took place off the Essex coast. The treaty, which had brought some measure of peace for a time, was broken by the Danes. Bloodshed and havoc were once again let loose upon the unhappy land. In this state of affairs, Alfred's navy struck a sudden blow. At the mouth of the Stour, off Harwich, on the northern boundary of Essex, the English fleet fell suddenly upon sixteen ships of the Danes and, taking them by surprise, destroyed them. The triumph, however, was short-lived. The English ships, returning victorious, had but reached the mouth of the Thames when they fell in with another fleet of the Danish pirates, and were themselves utterly defeated and destroyed.

But Alfred, in spite of this disaster, re-took London. The town had felt to the full the changes and miseries of this troubled time. Destroyed, as has been said, by the Danes in the time of King Ethelwulf, it was rebuilt by Alfred only to fall again into the hands of the Danes during these later troubles. Its re-conquest by Alfred was soon followed by the death of Guthrum, and after that event Essex again came under the rule of the English king. But the region was still to be torn by savage and ruthless war. The most formidable of the later Danish foes of Alfred, the famous chief Hastings, who for some time had been wasting and plundering the rich valleys of France, sailed with a great fleet into the Thames and landed in Kent. Being there closely beset by the tireless Alfred, the Danes fled across the Thames, took to their ships, and sought refuge on an island in the Colne in Essex, where they were closely besieged by the king.

In this extremity of the invaders, help was afforded

them by their kinsmen, the Danes of Northumbria and East Anglia, who, to create a diversion, sent fleets to besiege Exeter. Alfred, leaving a garrison to protect London, hurried westward to meet the new danger. This gave the Danes in Essex an opportunity of uniting their scattered forces. At Shoebury, they built a fort to protect their booty and shipping, whilst they made plundering incursions westward even to the banks of the Severn and to Chester.

Another refuge of the Danes was Mersea Island at the mouth of the Colne. From that shelter a body of the pirates sailed up the Thames and the Lea to a point some twenty miles above London. King Alfred, however, met the attack with great skill. By making a cut or canal through the Hackney Marshes, he formed a new channel for some of the waters of the Lea. As a result, the river was made too shallow for the Danish ships, and the retreat of the rovers by water was prevented. They were then attacked by Alfred, their ships destroyed, and the Danes who escaped with their lives fled overland. The canal which Alfred cut exists to-day, it is generally believed, in the so-called Channelsea River, which many of us cross frequently when we go along Stratford High Street into London.

Alfred at length had a dreadful ally in his struggle with his Danish foes. Plague fell upon the suffering land, already wasted with burnings and slaughter. The wandering bands of Danes therefore withdrew, and the settled Danes of the Danelagh submitted to the king.

After the death of the great King Alfred in 901, his son Edward the Elder, who inherited much of his father's foresight and skill as a soldier, had to continue the fight to protect his land and his throne from the Danes. Edward adopted the plan of building fortified posts in which he might station garrisons to check the advance of the Danes

into the country. As we have seen, Essex was a kind of debatable land between the English and the Danes. Its creeks were frequent landing-places, and its islands shelters for the sea-rovers. Edward therefore placed several of his fortified posts within the borders of the county, at Witham, at Colchester, and at Maldon. At the last-mentioned place, he won a great victory over the Danes. Colchester, which had fallen into the hands of the foe, was besieged and taken by the English towards the end of King Edward the Elder's reign.

CHAPTER XIII

OLD ENGLISH BUILDINGS IN ESSEX

After the confused fighting and tumults of which we have been reading, Essex had a long interval of peace lasting through the greater part of the tenth century.

During this period, there was a great increase in the power of the churchmen and especially in that of the monks. While the struggles with the Danes were going on, purity and strictness of life among the English clergy had decayed. But during the period with which we are now dealing, there arose in England a movement led by the great churchman and statesman Dunstan to enforce stricter rules of life both in the case of the parish priests, who lived among their parishioners, and in the case of the monks, who lived retired in their monasteries. The result was a great increase in the power of the clergy, and for a long time Dunstan himself was by far the most powerful man in the country. Mingled, however, with the increased respect of our forefathers for religion and its professed servants, there was a very great amount of superstition.

During the troubles with the Danes, many churches and monasteries had been sacked and burnt to the ground. The heathen Danes had felt a fierce hatred against the places where Christ was worshipped and, moreover, their hopes of plunder were excited by the precious vessels used in the services of the Church. In the time of peace, many of these religious houses were rebuilt and others no doubt built for the first time.

Thus, for example, we find that the great Abbey of Barking, which for a long period was the richest nunnery in England, was burnt to the ground by the Danes in 870. One wonders what was the fate of the hapless nuns ! For a century its site lay desolate, but at length King Edgar, surnamed the Peaceful, during the time of Dunstan's power, restored the abbey and made a nun, whom he had wronged, its Abbess. After Edgar's death, his widow took possession of the Abbey. As we shall see, she was not the only royal lady who was proud to hold the position of Abbess of Barking.

But of the churches and monasteries which were built about this time, very few traces remain in Essex. Indeed, thoughout England, buildings undoubtedly of Anglo-Saxon origin are rare. The Old English had made but little advance in the art of building. Thus it came to pass that, in later years, when men had learnt how to build wonderfully strong and wonderfully beautiful churches, the old Anglo-Saxon churches were pulled down and nobler and more beautiful churches raised in their places.

Moreover, Anglo-Saxon churches and Anglo-Saxon buildings generally were built of wood, and were therefore more perishable than buildings of stone. And, while it is true that the buildings throughout England were generally of wood, this was especially the case in a county like Essex, where timber was abundant and good building

stone rare. Even to-day, the buildings in any district are mainly constructed of the materials which lie close at hand, because carriage from a distance enormously increases the cost of the materials. But this increase in cost was much greater in early days, when roads were merely rough tracks, leading often through dense forests and undrained marshes, and when unbridged rivers had to be forded.

Now in Essex there are no supplies of building stone, if we except the stones known as *septaria* which are found in the London clay, and which were used in some old work, and the flints, obtained from the chalk, of which many of our churches are built. Two plentiful supplies of building material, however, exist. These are clay, from which bricks can be made, and an abundant store of timber from the ancient forests. But the Old English did not know how to make bricks, and hence the only building material ready to their hands in Essex was timber.

We can readily understand, therefore, why remains of Saxon architecture are very rare in Essex. It is true that it is generally said that the churches at Boreham and Felstead in the county are Saxon, but it seems more probable that they are really examples of Early Norman work.

The churches, or rather portions of churches, in the county, which are generally considered to be the work of our Old English ancestors are the tower of Trinity Church at Colchester, and the nave of the little church at Greenstead near Ongar.

The tower of Trinity Church, Colchester, is our only example of work, certainly of Saxon origin, which is built of material other than wood. Though the Old English did not make bricks, they found in Colchester great stores of the bricks or tiles that the Romans had

left behind them, and they used, as their descendants in Essex often did in later years, the ruins of old Roman works as quarries, from which they might get more durable building materials than they could otherwise obtain. The tower of Trinity Church is largely built of these Roman bricks. The west doorway has the triangular arch often found in Saxon work, and the windows have plain arches in the form of semicircles.

Arrangement of the Logs in the Wall of Greenstead Church

Like many other parts of the tower, these window-arches are made of Roman bricks.

But the great pride of Essex in the way of Saxon building is the nave of the little church at Greenstead. There, weathered and worn by the storms and suns of nine hundred years, but still sound and stout, stand the oaken logs hewn from the neighbouring forest to form the walls of the little building.

Greenstead Church stands in a trim churchyard not far from the ancient town of Ongar, at the end of a long

avenue of trees. At first sight, we are struck mainly by the smallness of the building; but approaching closer, we are surprised to find that the walls of the little nave are built of the upright trunks of trees. Outside, except that the bark has been stripped off, the trunks are untrimmed, but inside the church the marks of the axe can still be seen.

So ancient are the logs, and so furrowed and weathered by the rain and wind and sunshine of centuries, that it is difficult to name the tree from which they were obtained. It has, however, been decided that they are the split trunks of oak-trees.

The top of each log has been fashioned off with the axe into the shape of a wedge, and these ends let into a groove in the roof-plate and fastened into position by wooden pins. The bottoms of the logs are morticed into the sill. The wall is rendered weather-tight by the sides of the logs being grooved and by timbers fastened by oaken tongues being let in between them.

This church, in the leafy little hamlet of Greenstead, or rather the nave of the building, is one of the most ancient in England. It is generally agreed that it dates back to at least 1013, so that it is one of the few Saxon buildings left to us.

The theory of its Saxon origin is supported by what we are told by the old chroniclers concerning the life of St. Edmund, King of East Anglia. Edmund became king in 855, when but a boy of fourteen years. Very little is known of his reign until the Danes, "the heathen men" as the chroniclers call them, harried East Anglia and Mercia during the years 866–70, before passing into Wessex in 871.

Edmund struggled in vain against the invaders, and at length, according to some, gave himself up to his foes, hoping by his surrender to save his subjects from the

miseries which the Danes inflicted upon them. Whether he did indeed surrender of his own free-will, or whether he was captured, it is certain that his merciless foes, on his refusal to become a heathen, bound him to a tree and shot him to death with arrows.

Some years afterwards, in the reign of Edward the Elder, the bones of the martyred king were removed to St. Edmund's Bury, and there the great King Athelstan built a monastery in their honour. The piety of King Edmund and his martyrdom at the hands of the heathen, made his relics an object of great veneration to our forefathers.

In the days of Ethelred Unrede, the inroads of the Danes again wasted the land, and at last, as we shall read elsewhere in this book, overthrew the Old English kingdom. During these troubled times, the East Saxons were greatly concerned for the safety of the sacred relics of the saintly king. Pious hands, therefore, removed them in 1010 from St. Edmund's Bury to London.

In 1013, however, it was deemed safe to return them to their former resting-place, and on their way back they rested, we are told, for a while in a "wooden chapel" near Ongar. We have good reason to believe that we may to-day see that wooden chapel in the nave of the little Greenstead Church.

The building tells us, then, something of how our forefathers nine hundred years ago built their churches. And, in regard to this and other village churches, we must remember that throughout the "ages of faith", that is, down to the time of the breach between the English Church and the Church of Rome, the people of our towns and villages put their best and most loving work into the building and the decoration of their churches.

The parish church represented to them not only the hope of salvation in the next world. It and its clergy

were often their only defence, in this world, against the greed or the cruelty of an unjust lord. Moreover, it was the centre of the whole life of the village, the source of nearly everything gracious or pleasant which brightened their lives of hard toil and privation. Thus, in the old days men delighted in making their church fair and seemly within and without; building it with the loving care from which good work springs, and decorating it with carvings and hangings and wrought metal work. In Old English times, however, the love of the church was mingled with gross superstition and with an awe of the priests which gave to them a power not always wisely or rightly used.

If, therefore, Greenstead Church fairly represents the Old English churches, it speaks of a time when architecture in England had made little advance. In Saxon England buildings were generally made of wood. "There was a time", says the Venerable Bede, "when there was not a stone church in all the land, but the custom was to build them all of wood."

It is, however, true that some Saxon work in stone remains, and, as we have seen, the tower of Trinity Church, Colchester, is largely built of Roman bricks. Even in this early stonework, however, the influence of building in wood is often seen, the builder appearing to imitate in stone what he was accustomed to see in the interlacing beams and the decorations of woodwork. The result has been well called "stone-carpentry", though some writers believe that the effect was due to the influence of Roman buildings and not to that of building in wood.

It was not until the Norman Conquest that church-building in stone became general. In regard to building, as other matters, it is important to remember that we may, not without reason, date the beginning of the

Greenstead Church, 1845

Greenstead Church, Present Day

Norman Conquest from the accession of Edward the Confessor.

That king was himself more than half a Norman. His mother was Emma of Normandy; he had lived for many years in Normandy, and he spoke Norman-French as his mother tongue.

Thus it came about that he gave broad lands to Norman barons and livings to Norman priests, and even promised his crown to the Norman duke. He also brought Norman builders into England, and with their work the Norman architecture, of which we shall have to speak later, began in our country.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DANISH CONQUEST

The peace which had lasted so long between England and the Danes was broken at last. During the interval, the Danes or Northmen had been occupied in conquering and settling that part of the north of France which is called after them, Normandy, the land of the Normans or Northmen, to this day. But, when Normandy had been conquered and settled, England again invited their attacks, the more so as a weak and foolish king, Ethelred Unrede, sat upon the throne.

The storm burst early upon Essex. The creeks of the Essex coast again offered the Danes convenient landing-places, and their fleet sailed up the Blackwater in 993. Their forces were met by the English under Brithnoth, the Alderman of Essex—Alderman is an English title afterwards supplanted by the Danish word, Earl. A fierce battle ensued, the story of which is told in the Old English poem *The Fight of Maldon*, a fragment which is remarkable from the fact that it was written immediately

MALDON, ESSEX (From an old print)

after the battle. The poet, in his character of eye-witness, describes only those movements which could be seen from the English position, and it is therefore probable that it was written by some East Saxon who fought beneath the standard of the Alderman. The result was disastrous to the English : Brithnoth was killed and the Danes spread plundering and slaying all over the eastern counties.

In his sore difficulty, Ethelred adopted the foolish plan of paying the Danes large sums of money to leave the kingdom, a course of action which invited fresh inroads. A plan, both foolish and treacherous, was then formed of murdering all the Danes who were settled in England. This had the effect of bringing the whole force of the Northmen into the field under the King of Denmark, Sweyn, himself.

The weak and foolish Ethelred was succeeded by a prince of a different character known as Edmund Ironside, who vigorously took up the struggle on the English side. His antagonist was Canute or Cnut, the son of Sweyn, and for a time the issue of the contest was doubtful. But the brave and unfortunate Edmund had to struggle against other than open foes. One of his most powerful nobles, Edric, was a traitor to his king and nation.

The two rivals, Edmund and Canute, met in battle at Ashingdon or Assundun, on the banks of the River Crouch in Essex. On foot, after the manner of the Old English, King Edmund awaited beneath his royal standard the attack of the Danes under the leadership of Canute. But the courage of Edmund and of his faithful followers could not avail against treachery. In the very crisis of the fight the false Edric fled with his men, and in consequence the English were utterly defeated and many of their chief men were slain.

But the defeat did not crush the spirit of Edmund.

He again appeared in arms, and the country was divided between him and Canute much as it had been divided between Alfred and Guthrum. Soon afterwards, the unfortunate King Edmund was murdered, it is said by traitors in league with Edric, and the whole country passed under the rule of the Danes. For a quarter of a century England was ruled in succession by three Danish kings. The sudden death of the last of these gave the English an opportunity to restore the old line of English kings, and in 1042 Edward, the son of Ethelred Unrede and Emma of Normandy, ascended the throne.

CHAPTER XV

THE LAST OF THE OLD ENGLISH KINGS

King Edward was, as has been said, half a Norman by birth. Moreover, he was almost entirely Norman in training, in tastes, and in language. Hence his reign is the beginning of the struggle which ended in the conquest of England by the Normans. Indeed, the years of Edward's reign were largely occupied in a contest for mastery between the Normans whom Edward brought over and the English. In this contest the English had for their leaders the powerful Earl Godwin and, after his death, his still more powerful son, Earl Harold.

In truth, the king was but ill qualified to fill his high office in those hard and stormy times. His gentle spirit was wholly inclined towards a religious life ; he was a king whom Nature had intended for a monk.

Edward, whose piety earned him the name of Confessor, was closely associated with the county of Essex. His favourite home was at the pretty village of Havering-atte-Bower, not far from the town of Romford, and several legends connect the village with the memory of

the saintly king. One of these tells us that the Confessor was disturbed in his prayers and devotions by the great number of nightingales which sang in the thickets surrounding his palace. The king, therefore, prayed that the songsters might be banished from the neighbourhood; and for long afterwards, we are told, no nightingales sang at Havering, though the woods of neighbouring places resounded with their melody.

Another legend tells us that as the king was riding in Essex, he met a "fair old man", who besought alms of him in the names of God and St. John. Now the king's purse-bearer was not with him, and therefore the Confessor drew his ring from his finger and gave it to the beggar. Some years after, two English pilgrims, who had lost their way while travelling in the Holy Land, met a company clothed all in white and with them a very ancient man. By him the pilgrims were well entertained and refreshed, and, when they were about to depart, the ancient man revealed himself to them as St. John and as the beggar to whom the king had given his ring. Moreover, he charged them to return the ring to the Confessor as a token, and to bear message to him to put his earthly affairs in order, for in six months he should enter into the joy of heaven. So the pilgrims, having returned, sought out the king at his Bower at Havering, and all things happened as had been foretold. The story of the old legend is represented on the screen of the chapel in Westminster Abbey wherein the Confessor lies buried.

From this legend, some people fancifully derived the name Havering, reading it as "Have-Ring". The name, according to others, comes from Old English words meaning goat's meadow.

One of the churches built by the Norman builders who were brought over to England by Edward the Confessor was the abbey church of Waltham. A curious old legend

tells how a church came first to be built in a spot which was then in the heart of the great forest that covered a large part of Essex and Middlesex. In the days of the last Danish king, the lands around Waltham belonged to a great Danish lord named Tofig, who was standard-bearer to the king, and who stood high in his favour. In his forest-lands, Tofig, like many a great man before and after him, built himself a hunting-lodge. There he was staying, hunting the deer and the other game with which the forest abounded, when strange events happened, according to the legend, in other lands which Tofig held in the county of Somerset.

One of Tofig's vassals, a smith by trade, dreamed a dream. In his dream, it was revealed to him that, in a certain place, a holy cross lay buried. The pious smith dug at the spot foretold, and his faith was rewarded by his finding a wondrous cross of black marble encased in silver and studded with precious stones. For so great a treasure, only the most sacred shrine could be a fitting resting-place. Therefore the smith procured a cart, yoked oxen thereto, and deposited the precious cross within. But the oxen refused to take one step on the road to the holy town of Glastonbury, sacred to St. Joseph of Arimathea, whither the smith proposed to lead them. Nor would they budge one inch upon the road towards any other famous shrine. In this difficulty the parish priest, who had been consulted by the smith, advised that they should try whether the oxen would take the cross to the hunting-lodge of the smith's master, Tofig, at Waltham. No sooner was this decided upon than the oxen jogged readily on and, after a journey of some one hundred and fifty miles, brought the cross safely to Waltham.

The cross being thus wonderfully brought to him, Tofig built for its reception the first Church of the

Holy Cross at Waltham. The wonders attending the cross did not cease with the building of the church, for by its means, we are told, many persons were miraculously cured of divers diseases. In course of time, the lands of Tofig passed into the possession of Earl Harold, and, while Edward the Confessor still sat upon the throne, the earl pulled down the small church that Tofig had built and set up a much greater and finer church in its place. He appointed a dean and a schoolmaster, and twelve canons to serve the church, and gave broad lands for its maintenance. At its consecration in 1060 King Edward and his queen were present.

The Church of the Holy Cross at Waltham was very dear to the heart of Harold. Only a few years after its consecration, on the death of the Confessor, he became king. He had, of course, no claim to the throne by virtue of descent. His power, however, which during the reign of the Confessor had overshadowed that of the king, enabled him to obtain the consent of the Witan. He was helped by the fact that he was the most able English soldier of his time, while Edgar, the descendant of the Old English line of kings, was quite incapable of resisting with success the threatened invasion of the Normans. His accession brought to a head the struggle for the mastery of England, which had been going on throughout the reign of the Confessor.

In his brief and troubled reign of nine months, King Harold gave further gifts to his church. After he had marched northwards and defeated and slain his traitor brother and the King of Norway at Stamford Bridge, there came the news of the landing of Duke William of Normandy upon the Sussex coast. Hurrying southwards the king reached London. He would not wait there until he could collect the whole forces of his kingdom, nor would he intrust the command of the army to another.

Many writers have blamed Harold for acting thus. Probably, however, he had good reasons for what he did. If he could have successfully barred the advance of the Normans and held the high ground, his enemy would have had to draw their supplies from the region they had already ravaged. Half-starved, they would have been, in a few days, at the mercy of the strong force which, by that time, King Harold could have led to the attack.

It was, therefore, probably not blind fury against the invader, but the reasoned purpose of a great general, which impelled Harold on his hurried march southward. But, hasty though his march was, he found time, we are told, to spend some hours at Waltham, in order that he might pray before the Holy Cross in his own church.

Early in the morning, says the old writer, the king arose, and going into the church prayed to God that He would grant him the victory, and, having finished his prayers, made to leave the church. But, as he passed out, he again turned his face towards the Holy Cross and knelt in prayer. And behold, a strange thing happened, for the head of Christ upon the Cross, which had before looked upward, bent forward and so remained as if in sorrow. No wonder that men said this was an evil omen!

Then King Harold went forth from the church, and with his huscarles or body-guard, and with the men of Essex, East Anglia, and Kent, but without the levies of Mercia and the North, hastened southwards to the fatal field of Senlac. In his last fight, the thought of his church at Waltham seems to have been with the king, for the war-cry of the English was ' Holy Cross ! '

In the battle, the plans of Harold miscarried. Not the lack of courage, but the lack of discipline led to the undoing of the English army. Not content to hold their ground, the English footmen broke their ranks in pursuit,

and were ridden down by the Norman cavalry. Their king fell in the last desperate stand, and in his death England lost her only soldier capable of coping with Duke William of Normandy.

No one can say with certainty where the body of King Harold lies. The generally received account is that of the chronicler, who tells us that with the king at Hastings were two of the canons of Waltham. After the battle, we are told, they and the mother of Harold besought Duke William that they might take the body and bury it at Waltham, so that the king in death might rest within the church which he had founded and loved during life. At the time, the Norman duke refused, but later, when he had been crowned king, he relented, and the body of Harold was, we are told, laid at rest in the church of Waltham.

There was, at one time, a grave in the Abbey Church, covered by a stone bearing an inscription in Latin, meaning, "Here lies Harold the Unfortunate," but it is not certain whether it really contained his body. William's own chaplain tells us that Harold was buried on the cliff at Hastings. Indeed, whether any part of the present church was built by Harold is a subject of dispute. The nave is undoubtedly the work of Norman builders, and is a very fine specimen of their skill. Some writers believe that in it we may see the actual work of the Normans whom Earl Harold employed, just as King Edward the Confessor employed Normans to build his Abbey at Westminster. Other writers say that the fine finish and ornament of the work at Waltham show it to have been built at a somewhat later time, after the Norman Conquest had been completed. But it is, at any rate, certain that at Waltham we stand upon the ground where Harold built his church in honour of God and the Holy Cross; the church in which he worshipped before he went to his death beneath

the banner of the Fighting Man at Senlac ; the church which possibly sheltered his mortal remains while his land lay under the hand of the Conqueror.

CHAPTER XVI

THE HAND OF THE OPPRESSOR

After William the Conqueror had been crowned King of England in the Abbey of Westminster, he moved his forces out of London and took up a position at the town of Barking. No doubt his object was to be out of reach of any sudden rising of the people of London until he had built his strong castle—the beginning of the famous Tower of London—to overawe the town and to guard him against sudden attack. At the same time it was necessary that he should be near London, and Barking fulfilled that condition. Moreover, the place had probably been fortified against the Danes, for according to some the name Barking is derived from Old English words meaning "a fortified meadow". Very possibly, therefore, the old works gave shelter to William's soldiers and the Abbey itself a temporary home for the Conqueror and his court. The creek of the Thames, upon which the town stands, would also give William a direct communication by water with Normandy. His messengers could go and return by sea without danger from the bands of English who, in all probability, infested the forests of Kent and Sussex.

Great scenes the little town doubtless witnessed in those days. Thither came messengers from the English Earls of Mercia and Northumbria, Edwin and Morcar, whose forces had been absent from the battle that decided the fate of their land ; deputations from the City of London

and many other towns; churchmen and soldiers from Normandy anxious to share in the spoil their Duke had won. Down to quite recent times meadows in East Ham were known as the "Parly Marshes", and there William is said to have met the deputations from London. The Normans, as you no doubt know, had adopted the French language, and you will recognize in the word "parly" the French verb *parler*, to talk, confer, which also occurs in our word "Parliament".

Very hard were the conditions which the Conqueror imposed upon Essex. His hand indeed lay heavy upon every district throughout the length and breadth of England. Nearly all the land was taken from the English owners and granted by William to his Norman followers to be held by them as his vassals, bound to follow him to war and to furnish him with soldiers. Thus the native English passed under the rule of foreign knights and barons by whom they were oppressed and treated as a subject and inferior people. How completely the land changed hands is told in the great record which William caused to be drawn up of all the lands in England, except in the extreme northern counties. This Domesday book sets out the position of the lands, their holders, and the stock upon them, both in the time of the Confessor and of William, and their respective values in the two reigns.

The account which Domesday Book gives of Essex is especially full, and in it we may to this day read—for it is still carefully preserved—the names of those to whom the lands were given, and many interesting facts about the holdings. The record of the Domesday survey is in two volumes, and the smaller of these—sometimes called the Lesser Domesday—deals with Essex, Norfolk, and Suffolk only.

The record of Essex shows that, with a few trifling exceptions, all the lands passed out of the hands of the English

owners into those of the Norman king and his followers. William himself held broad lands in Essex, and there were great estates of the Bishop of London, who had one of his chief seats just outside the borders of the county, at the place which, on that account, is called Bishop's Stortford to this day. There were also estates of the Abbeys of Waltham and Barking, and of foreign abbeys in Normandy. Among the clergy who held lands was the half-brother of William, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux. Odo, however, held his lands not for the Church but for himself, as a warrior-baron. In Norman days, bishops not seldom led their vassals to battle, and Odo had ridden in the Norman ranks at Hastings with iron mace instead of sword in his hand and coat of mail under his priestly robe.

The names of founders of two families especially important in the history of Essex are found in the list of the Normans who from the time of William held great estates in Essex. The first of these is Geoffrey de Mandeville, who held many manors. One of this family became the first Earl of Essex, and their great stronghold was the Castle of Pleshey. Another of the Norman landholders was Aubrey de Vere, in whose family the Earldom of Oxford was afterwards vested and held for many centuries. The De Veres, Earls of Oxford, in uninterrupted length of descent were one of the greatest and noblest families, not only of England, but of the whole of Europe. Though they took their title from Oxford, their chief seat and stronghold was at Hedingham in Essex, and the Norman keep which they built at Castle Hedingham still stands to show us what the stronghold of a great feudal baron was like.

Another important holder of Essex lands was Eudo Dapifer, who founded the Abbey of St. John at Colchester. Probably too he built the great stronghold of Colchester

Castle, which has played an important part in history, and the remains of which may still be seen in the ancient town.

Many other Norman and French names are found in the list of holders. Towards the end, however, we find some small estates held by the bearers of English or Danish names. There are, for instance, one Grim and one Godwin who still held the lands they had held under the Confessor, and a widow who held the lands that her husband, Phin the Dane, had held before the Conquest. But the holdings left to the English were few and small. The great bulk of the land passed to the conquerors. In one place, in the Essex Domesday, there is the record of a man who, in the time of Edward the Confessor, was a freeman owning a small piece of land. At the time of the Survey he was no longer a freeman but a villein, tilling the land, that was formerly his, for the benefit of his Norman lord. No doubt his fate was that of many unfortunate English freemen upon whom the hand of the oppressor fell, robbing them not only of land, but of that far more precious thing, liberty.

The only remaining building of the old Abbey of Barking, the Fire Bell Gate, serves to remind us of one of the Conqueror's laws often given as an instance of his tyranny. The gate, though it is of much later date than the time of the Conquest, gets its name from the Curfew Bell which formerly hung in it. The ringing of the Curfew Bell at nightfall, as a signal that fires should be put out, was, however, probably ordered by the Conqueror merely as a measure to prevent fires. It is evident that the danger from fire was especially great in an age when a large majority of the dwellings were built entirely of wood.

THE CHAPEL OF THE HOLY ROOD, BARKING
(FIRE BELL GATE)

CHAPTER XVII

GOOD QUEEN MAUD

After the reigns of the Conqueror and of his son William II, the first ray of hope came to the conquered English in the reign of Henry I, the youngest of the three sons of William I. Henry I seized the crown in the absence of his elder brother Robert, who, at the time of the death of William II, was on his way home from the Crusades. Now, since many of the Norman barons were in favour of having Robert for their king, Henry had to rely more than the two Norman kings who preceded him upon the support of the English, and he, therefore, gave them a charter of liberties. Moreover, his wife was a princess who was descended from the old line of English kings. Thus the children of Henry I and his queen, and their descendants right down to our present king, traced their descent, not only from William I and the Dukes of Normandy, but also from Alfred and the Old English kings.

The wife of Henry I, who is known in history both as Matilda and as Maud, is very closely connected with the history of Essex. She was very dear to the English people, partly no doubt because she was a queen of their own blood, and partly because of her character, which earned her the title of "Good Queen Maud". In her youth she had, according to some writers, been a novice in a nunnery. Whether that is so or not, she had been brought up by her aunt, who was the Abbess of Wilton, or of Romsey.

Queen Maud was the second of the three queens who were proud to number among their honours and titles that of being Abbess of Barking. The first, you will

Old Bow Bridge

remember, was Elfreda, widow of Edgar the Peaceful, and the third was Matilda, wife of King Stephen, who succeeded Henry I on the throne.

Now Queen Maud had, of course, occasionally to pay a visit to her abbey, and one of these journeys had very important results. After passing out of London through one of the gates in the city wall, she had to pursue her way along the route of the old Roman road, through the open country, and through the little hamlet of Bethnal Green, until she came to the marshes fringing the river Lea, at the place known to this day as "Old Ford". We must remember that in the days of which we are speaking scarcely any bridges existed. The traveller who came to a river plunged through, on horseback or on foot, at a shallow place, or, in some cases, was carried over in a ferry-boat.

In the particular journey of which we are speaking, some accident happened, and the queen was, as an old writer puts it, "well washed" during the crossing. Therefore, we are told by the old writer, John Stow, who wrote towards the end of the sixteenth century, the queen "caused two stone bridges to be builded in a place one mile distant from the old foord, of the which, one was situated over Lue (i.e. the river Lea) at the head of the towne of Stratford now called Bow, a rare piece of worke, for before that time the like had never beene seen in England: the other over the little brooke commonly called Chanelsebridge".

Queen Maud's bridge was of great importance to Essex and the whole of the eastern counties, for it gave a greatly improved means of communication with London. Those of us who live near the present bridge, which stands in about the same place as Queen Maud's, know the vast stream of traffic of all kinds that crosses it daily. Though of old days the volume of traffic was less, yet, from the

time of its building, it became one of the chief routes leading into London. Especially was it one of the main roads along which the food supplies of London passed.

If you examine the map of England, you will find that many of our old towns and villages grew up at river-

Remains of Stratford Langthorne Abbey, 1819

crossings, as is shown by the frequency with which the words 'ford' and 'bridge' occur in their names. The reason, of course, is that where traffic concentrates, houses and shops will spring up to supply the wants of the travellers. One result of Queen Maud's bridge was that two villages grew up, one upon the Middlesex and one upon the Essex bank. The bridge itself was called

Bow Bridge, because it was built in the form of an arch or bow. The Middlesex village was therefore called Stratford-atte-Bowe, and was the parent village of that part of London we now call Bow. The Essex village was Stratford Langthorne, or Stratford-le-Bow, and, under the name of Stratford, is now an important part of the great borough of West Ham.

In Norman times West Ham itself was but a tiny village. The new road no doubt gave it more importance, and this was increased by the fact that the Norman lord who owned the lands of West Ham, William de Montfichet, Lord of Stanstead in Essex, founded an abbey there in 1135. No portion of the abbey now stands, but those who know the Abbey Mills, Stratford, have still, in that name, a reminder of the fact that long ago pious monks prayed in the quiet monastery, and worked in their pleasant fields and gardens on the spot now covered by streets and factories, and echoing to the rush of the trains on the Great Eastern line to Woolwich which crosses the site.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FOREST OF ESSEX

The chief serious occupations of the Norman kings and nobles were war and government; their chief amusement was hunting. William the Conqueror, we are told in the old chronicle, loved the tall deer like a father. It does not seem a very fatherly love to hunt them down and kill them, but he certainly was more careful of their preservation for his sport than he was of the welfare of the human beings who dwelt within the borders of the Royal Forests.

Therefore, he made very strict and harsh laws to protect

the deer and the game in his forest-lands. One of the most important of these great hunting-grounds was the Forest of Essex, or Waltham Forest, the remains of which are known to us as Epping and Hainault Forests. Long after the Norman times, the forest was still full of game, for towards the end of the sixteenth century the antiquary, Camden, wrote : " Near the Ley . . . spreads out a chase of vast extent, full of game, the largest and fattest deer in the kingdom."

Laws to protect these fat deer had been enacted at least as early as the time of Canute, but they were made much harsher by the Conqueror. The penalty for killing a deer was heavier than the punishment for killing a man. If an unfortunate wanderer in the forest, even by chance, frightened a deer so that it " was forced by swift running to loll out its tongue ", he was severely punished. Or, if his " greedy, ravening dog " bit a wild beast, he had to pay to the king a recompense according " to the value of a freeman ". But the dogs within the forest-lands, however greedy and ravening they might be, were given little chance of biting the wild beasts, for they were crippled by having three claws cut off the forefoot close to the ball of the foot. Moreover, the man who dwelt within forest limits had to consider the interests of the deer more than his own livelihood. He was not allowed to build fences so high as to prevent a doe with her fawn from leaping over them in order to feed upon his crops, nor must he drive off the deer when they wandered on to his fields. To enforce these laws, and to punish offenders, there were many officers, verderers and others, and no less than three Courts of Law.

The area included in the Forest of Essex was not all woodland. Here and there were great stretches of open land covered with grass, or with ling and bracken, such as you may find on a smaller scale in the forest to-day,

and such as Wanstead Flats were not very long ago. Within the limits of the forest, too, were villages and their cultivated lands. In spite of the harsh conditions and the damage done to their crops by the deer, men continued to dwell in these villages, though they complained bitterly of the Forest Laws.

Indeed they had some valuable compensations. One of the chief of these was the right of *pannage*, that is, the right of turning out pigs into the forest-land in the autumn to fatten upon the fallen acorns and beech-mast. In early times, woodland was often valued more for the number of pigs it would fatten than for the timber which it would produce. Horses and cows could also be turned out to feed in the forest for eleven months of the year. Moreover, the dweller in the forest could get his firewood free, for he had the right to cut off or "lop" the branches of the trees above a fixed height at certain times of the year. The name of the Lopping Hall at Loughton recalls this right.

Those who live near, or who occasionally visit Epping Forest, can scarcely fail to notice the results of this lopping. In most parts of the woodland the old trees are not of natural growth. The main trunk stops short some ten feet or so from the ground, where the tree was "lopped" in the past, and a number of thickly-placed branches shoot from the shorn crown of the tree.

Often, no doubt, the Norman kings rode out from their Tower in London and, crossing the Old Ford or Bow Bridge, came at once within the limits of the forest to chase the deer or to fly their falcons at the wild birds. Certain favoured persons were allowed to share in these privileges. For example, the Abbess of Barking was allowed to keep dogs to chase hares and foxes within the forest, and in the time of King Henry III it was enacted that "whatever archbishop, bishop, earl, or baron shall

be passing through our forests, it shall be lawful for them to take one or two deer, by view of a forester, if he shall be present ; if not, he shall cause a horn to be sounded, lest it should seem a theft".

By Henry III's time the limits of the forest had been reduced in size. King John had been forced to mitigate the harshness of the Forest Laws, and had also been obliged to limit the forest to the area between the road over the river Lea at Bow Bridge—the Romford Road—on the south-east, the river Lea on the west, and a line running through Nazing, Abridge, and Havering-atte-Bower on the north.

Wanderers in the forest at the present day may, if they will but get away from the beaten track, well be fortunate enough to see some of the descendants of the deer that Norman kings hunted long ago. They must not, it is true, expect to see any of the "largest and fattest deer" of which Camden speaks, for they, no doubt, were red deer, once numerous, but now no longer to be found in the forest. The fallow deer, however, still dwell in its thickets and may often be seen sweeping gracefully through the glades just as they did when king and noble hunted them in days when the forest, now the playground of the people, was the pleasure-land of the king alone.

CHAPTER XIX

RIVALS FOR THE THRONE: A FEUDAL BARON

The Normans, as we have seen, took the lands of the English for themselves and ruled the conquered people as a subject race. But in numbers they were much fewer than the English, and therefore, to strengthen their position, they built strong fortresses or castles to overawe

the people among whom they dwelt. Frequently, too, their castles were used as strongholds by the nobles in their quarrels with one another, or even in their conflicts with the king. Some of these Norman castles date from the years immediately after the Conquest. The Conqueror, however, had been very careful to prevent his nobles from becoming too powerful. He knew very well that, in France, the dukes and counts, himself amongst the number, frequently set the king at defiance. He did not, therefore, allow any one who pleased to build himself a strong castle.

But after the death of Henry I, there were two rivals for the throne; Matilda, daughter of Henry I, and Stephen, who was supported by most of the barons. Stephen, in order to please the great nobles and thus gain their favour, allowed them to build castles upon their estates. During the wars between Stephen and Matilda, many of the barons shut themselves up in their castles, whence they issued every now and then with their retainers and plundered and oppressed the people for miles around. Thus a time, far more terrible for common folk than the days of the strong, hard rule of the Conqueror, came upon England; a time so terrible that men, we are told, said "that God and His saints slept".

A type of the bad feudal barons which these troubled times produced, was Geoffrey de Mandeville, a grandson of the Norman of the same name, to whom William I had granted broad lands in Essex. Geoffrey held the strong castles of Pleshey and Saffron Walden, built upon his great estates. But the fact that he was Constable of the Tower of London made him even more powerful than did the possession of his feudal castles, for it put into his hands the key of the greatest town in the land.

Such a position, if Geoffrey had been a true man,

careful of the welfare of his country, might have enabled him to do great service. But, unfortunately, he saw, in his own great power and in the civil war which rent his unhappy country, only a means of making himself more and more powerful, until his power threatened the throne itself.

To advance his own interests, he was ready to stoop to any baseness. True, he was bold and brave, so bold indeed that he even dared to detain, in the Tower, Constance of France, who was betrothed to the son of King Stephen himself. Nevertheless, his support against Matilda was so valuable that, in 1141, King Stephen made him Earl of Essex, a title which he was the first to hold.

A few months later, however, fortune seemed to be turning in Matilda's favour. She arrived in London and Geoffrey promptly went over to her side and was rewarded by being confirmed in his earldom and by being made sheriff and justice of the county. We may well fear that there was little justice for those who came before so false an earl. But after a little while, Matilda was driven from London, and Geoffrey then again went over to Stephen and received as a reward three times the grants that Matilda had made to him. Moreover, he was made sheriff and justice, not only of Essex, but of Middlesex, Hertford, and London as well. All these treasons had taken place during one short year, and so far as worldly success is concerned the traitor earl had prospered by his falseness. He was now by far the greatest noble in the land, more dreaded by many than the king himself.

But, like many another evil and false man, Geoffrey de Mandeville overreached himself. Whilst he was still active on the side of Stephen and, indeed, the leader of the king's forces in an expedition against Ely, he was planning another treason. When it seemed to him that

Matilda was, after all, likely to be successful, he secretly made proposals to go over to her again in return for further great rewards. But the earl had miscalculated. It soon became evident that the cause of Matilda was failing, and Geoffrey therefore remained, in name at least, on the side of Stephen. We may be sure, however, that the king had a close watch kept upon one so powerful and yet so faithless, a man whom no oath could bind. The new treason was discovered, but probably because he did not at the moment feel sufficiently powerful, the king took no action, but bided his time.

Next year, the blow fell suddenly upon Geoffrey. At St. Albans he was accused of treason by some of the nobles whom his falseness and cruelty had made his enemies. There was a sharp struggle, but the proud earl was overborne and arrested. Of his guilt there could be no doubt, and he was offered the choice either of surrendering the Tower and his castles of Pleshey and Saffron Walden, or of being hanged, a death considered especially shameful to a man of noble birth.

When the castles had been surrendered, Stephen showed a far nobler spirit than the earl had done, for he set the ruined baron free. Had he been as faithless as Geoffrey, he would probably have imprisoned or executed the traitor. Geoffrey, however, was released and rushed, we are told, from the king's presence "like a vicious and riderless horse, kicking and biting" in his mad fury. Thenceforth, his hand against every man, he led a life of mad wickedness, setting at naught the laws of his country and of God. He fled first to the Isle of Ely, once the refuge of the patriot outlaw Hereward, and afterwards laid violent hands upon a house of God by seizing and fortifying Ramsey Abbey. From these head quarters he burst out at intervals at the head of his lawless followers, burnt Cambridge and many

smaller places, wasted and plundered the country, and did not spare even the churches.

Evidently Stephen had been too generous to so desperate and evil a man. All the Fenland lived in terror of him, and Stephen was therefore obliged to lead a force against him. But the earl was wary, as well as bold and cruel, and escaped into the recesses of the Fens. The king then proceeded to build a fortified post in order to cut off De Mandeville's communication with the mainland.

Geoffrey now endeavoured to follow the same plans that Hereward had used against the Normans in the days of the Conquest, and planned a surprise attack upon Stephen's fortified post. Fortunately for the peace of the land, it failed, and Geoffrey himself was mortally wounded. For twenty years his body lay unburied. By his plunder of churches he had proclaimed himself an enemy of God Himself, and as such had been excommunicated, that is, cut off from the services and offices of the Church. Therefore his body was as an accursed thing, which no man might even bury in the kindly earth. Years afterwards, however, when his son had made reparation to the Church, the bones of the turbulent baron were at length laid to rest.

So lived and died the first of the Earls of Essex, leaving, alas! the memory of an evil life. Evil, indeed, but not without its lessons to us; lessons that, though falsehood may flourish for awhile, yet truth and justice and honour are the abiding things, and that, even in this world, the way of the transgressor is hard. We can understand, too, how sad must have been the fate of the thousands whose happiness and honour, nay! whose very lives lay at the mercy of such a noble. In those days, the great hope of the common people lay in a strong, able king who, though he might be stern and hard himself, would yet maintain the law against barons who sought

to oppress the poor. Failing such a king, there was no hope for justice, much less for mercy; only one refuge remained, such shelter as the Church afforded, a shelter which only the worst of the barons dare violate.

We must not, however, suppose that all, or nearly all, the barons were as false and cruel and wicked as the first Earl of Essex. For we know that his son, the third earl, was a loyal and faithful servant of his country and his king, a good son of the Church and a brave soldier of the Cross.

CHAPTER XX

NORMAN CASTLES IN ESSEX

The names of some of the strong castles that the Normans built in Essex have already been mentioned; the castle of Geoffrey de Mandeville at Pleshey, for instance; a castle which we shall have to speak about more than once later. Twelve Norman castles were built in our county. Pleshey has gone, but fortunately there are remains of some which help us to understand how the great nobles lived in their strongholds. Behind their massive walls, in the days before cannon were invented, each baron dwelt "the king of the castle", as the old game says. In that game, the boy who proclaims himself "King of the Castle" perches himself upon a mound of earth or heap of sand and prepares to defend it against all comers. Probably the game is a very ancient one, which our ancestors played, as boys and girls, many centuries ago. Certainly, the mound of earth seems clearly to represent the natural hill or the artificial mound upon which stood the castle of the great and terrible lord who, to those lads and lasses, must have seemed the most powerful and the strongest man on earth.

Of some of our Essex castles only these mounds remain. There are more noticeable remains at Hadleigh, which those who spend their holidays at Southend can easily visit, and which they can hardly help seeing as they travel thither by train, and at Saffron Walden, one of the castles of the false earl, Geoffrey de Mandeville. But, by far the finest and the best of the Essex feudal castles

View of the Ruins of Hadleigh Castle

that remain to us are the keeps of Colchester and Hedingham Castles.

The keep was the chief tower and the strongest part of the castle. It was built not for comfort but for strength. Therefore its windows were few and small and its entrance was generally some distance above the level of the ground and was reached by an easily defended staircase in a smaller tower built against the keep itself. The keep stood in an open space or courtyard, itself surrounded by a fortified wall, which sheltered the stables and other buildings of the castle. Outside the wall was

the steep slope of the mound, or some natural cliff or hill, and around that ran a deep and wide moat spanned by a single drawbridge. You will see that a number of obstacles had to be overcome before the keep itself could be attacked. But the keep itself was the main stronghold, and it was almost impossible to take it, in days when

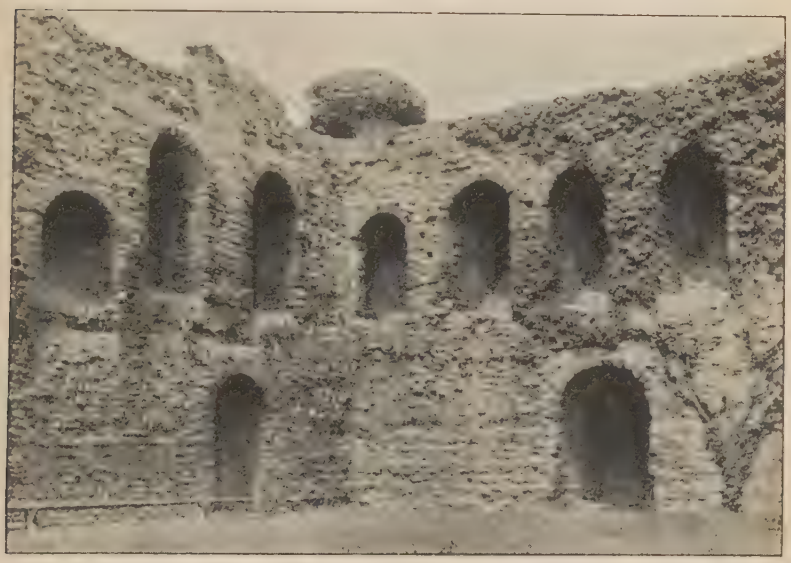
Colchester Castle

gunpowder was unknown, except by surprise or by starving out the garrison.

Colchester Castle stands upon high ground, and was probably built during the reign of the Conqueror by Eudo Dapifer, who was William's High Steward. In plan it is similar to the White Tower in the Tower of London, though considerably larger. It is therefore possible, and indeed probable, that it was designed by the same builder. As in all the Norman keeps, the walls are of great thickness. They are built of stone and Roman

brick, so that it is likely that the Normans used the materials that they found lying to their hands in the ruins of some old Roman fort that stood on or near the same spot.

The Castle of Hedingham, though not so large as Colchester Castle, is, in some respects, an even more perfect



Colchester Castle, Interior

example of a Norman keep. It stands upon a hill and rises to a height of 100 feet above it. The massive walls, ten to twelve feet thick, are fine examples of mason's work, and stand to-day as firm and solid as when they were built by Aubrey de Vere some eight hundred years ago.

For many centuries it was the chief stronghold and seat of the great family of the De Veres, Earls of Oxford. In power and in the length of the line of earls in unbroken

male descent the De Veres were one of the greatest of English families. Indeed, we sometimes use the name " De Vere " as a kind of general name for people of very long descent and high rank. Thus, for example, Tennyson speaks of " the caste of Vere de Vere ".

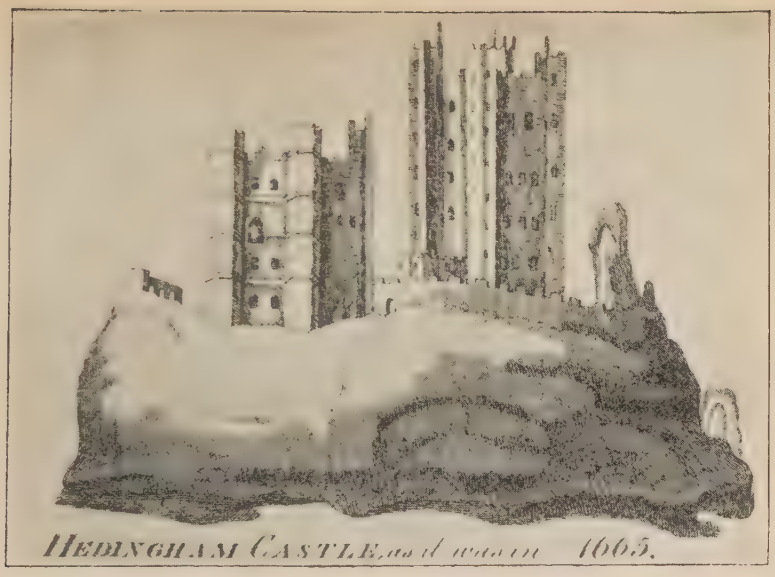
Nineteen Earls of Oxford, of the family of De Vere, possessed the Castle of Hedingham as the chief seat and stronghold of their family. The stout old walls, which still rise frowningly above the pleasant Essex landscape, have been silent witnesses of many stirring events, important not only in the history of our county, but in the wider history of England. Other Essex castles that played a more or less important part in the history of the county formerly stood at Tilbury, Rayleigh, and Ongar.

Apart from the castles and abbeys, scarcely any dwelling-places of Norman origin remain in Essex. This is, at any rate partly, accounted for by the fact that in those days there was scarcely any middle class. Nobles and knights dwelt in castles, or, at the least, in moated houses—there are many of these ancient moats in Essex—but the great bulk of the people dwelt in very flimsy and squalid houses which have long since disappeared. The house known as Guy Harlings, at Chelmsford, however, contains a portion of the original Norman house.

CHAPTER XXI

NORMAN CHURCHES IN ESSEX

The Normans built not only strong castles for war, but also many noble buildings for the service of God. Throughout the fierce, hard times of the Middle Ages, the Church was the only refuge for pious and gentle souls,



HEDINGHAM CASTLE

almost the only protector of the weak and helpless. Often, too, great nobles sought to make their peace with God by building churches in His honour, or abbeys and priories where the monks might pass their lives in pious meditation.

Now the Normans were great builders. They were a very clever people, apt to learn and quick to improve upon what they had learnt. They had not been settled long in France before they began to build great churches in what came to be known as the Norman style of architecture. This was a development of the style of building which they found already in use in the conquered dukedom, and ultimately it was derived from the architecture of the Romans. When they came to England the Normans pulled down many of the old Saxon churches and built larger and stronger churches in their places. So massive was most of their work that all over England you may to-day see churches wholly or partly of Norman construction.

In Essex the number of Norman churches is especially great. It is reckoned that some one hundred and twenty churches in the county contain more or less of Norman work. Now Domesday Book provides us with facts from which we can calculate that the population of Essex was at that period about 80,000. Even, then, if none of the churches which the Normans originally built have, in the course of many centuries, been destroyed—which is, of course, very improbable—they must have built churches in the county in the proportion of one for about every six hundred persons.

Perhaps the most striking thing about the Norman buildings, apart from their massiveness, is the semi-circular arch. These Norman arches we find crowning the pillars which separate the aisles from the nave, and in the doorways and windows. The picture of the nave of Waltham Abbey shows a very characteristic specimen

of Norman architecture. Notice the form of the arches, and notice also the solid round pillars upon which they are carried. It is important to remember that the Norman arch is very rarely pointed except in late work. When, as in Waltham Abbey, we find a pointed arch

Norman Doorway, Hatfield Peverell Church

following Norman arches in the building, we may reasonably conclude either that the original Norman arch was altered in later times, or that the part of the building containing the pointed arch is altogether of later date. Moreover, we should remember that the pointed style cannot be earlier than the end of the twelfth century, when it began to take the place of the Norman style.

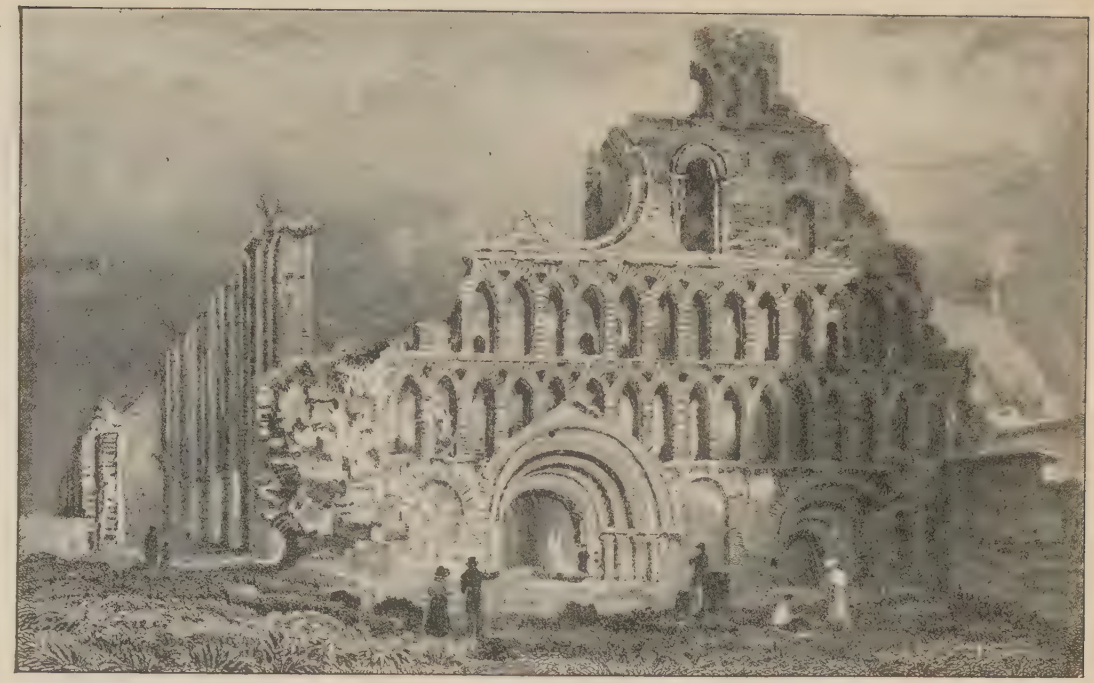
In Normandy, the churches which the Normans built had a semi-circular projection beyond the chancel, called the *apse*. This feature of the church was in imitation of Roman buildings. In England, the building of apses was not so universal. You will, however, find them still standing in the Essex churches at East Ham and Hadleigh.

Norman church-towers are few in Essex. The small number remaining is probably due to the fact that, massive though Norman buildings were, the mortar used was generally bad. Hence many of the towers fell in at the end of a century or so after being built. Perhaps the best of our Norman towers is that of Corringham Church.

Norman architecture is often decorated by simple but very varied ornaments, some of the most common and characteristic of which are the zigzag, billet, chevron, and nail-head. Spaces are often filled with what is called diaper-ornament; that is, a carved pattern repeated over again and again, each carving of the pattern being enclosed by lines or thin mouldings.

Typical Norman doorways in Essex show how much Norman buildings differed in the matter of ornament. Some, as at Little Totham Church, are perfectly simple, plain arches; others, like the entrance to Colchester Castle, show a moderate amount of ornament; while others, as at St. Botolph's Priory, Colchester, which was founded in 1102, show very elaborate ornamentation. In St. Botolph's Priory we also find the interlacing arches which are supposed by some people to have suggested the *pointed* arches which we find in the buildings that followed after the Norman style had been given up. You will notice these interlacing arches in the picture of St. Botolph's Priory.

It is important that we should distinguish between the parish churches and the abbeys and priories of the Middle



St. Botolph's Priory, Colchester

Ages. The parish churches were the places of worship in which laymen joined in the religious services which were conducted by priests who lived among their flocks. But the abbeys and priories were shelters for the monks and nuns, who shut themselves up from the world, concerned not so much to help others on the way to Heaven as to save their own souls. Many of these abbeys and priories became very great landowners, and the great abbots ranked among the nobles of the land. For example, the Abbess of Barking had the rank of a baron. As we have seen, three queens were Abbesses of Barking, and right down to the time of Henry VIII's quarrel with the Pope the office was held by a long succession of royal and noble ladies.

CHAPTER XXII

SOLDIERS OF THE CROSS

After the troubled times of King Stephen, a great king, Henry II, came to the throne. Henry had many personal faults, but he was a man of great ability, strong courage, and boundless energy. Moreover, he was a great lover of justice and saw clearly that his chief duty as a king was to make sure that even-handed justice was meted out to all his subjects. Hence, his first great object was to curb the power of the barons and to bring them also within the scope of the law.

Essex was not especially concerned in this work of Henry II, except that its earl, William de Mandeville, was one of the most trusted and able servants of the king in all his work. The life of William de Mandeville was, indeed, a complete contrast to that of his father, the first earl, the traitor noble of Stephen's reign. William

was a brave and able soldier, a wise statesman, and was employed by the king in many important duties. He was also one of the many nobles and knights who went on the Crusades, in the vain effort to win back the Holy Land, and especially the sepulchre of our Lord, from the hands of the Moslems.

Little Maplestead Church

Some men in those days, indeed, especially pledged themselves by sacred vows to this work, and thus there arose orders of military monks; half soldiers, half priests. Two of these orders had houses in Essex, the Knights Templars, who founded a house at Cressing in the reign of Stephen, and the Knights Hospitallers, who settled at Little Maplestead in the reign of Henry II. Their church there is one of the very few round churches in England.

In many of our old churches, we find effigies of long-dead

warriors upon ancient tombs. Frequently these effigies have the legs *crossed*, and many writers state that these cross-legged figures represent knights who had been upon a Crusade or, at the least, had taken a vow to go. The statement, however, seems to be founded rather upon fancy than upon solid grounds. Nevertheless, these ancient monuments are very interesting, for the effigies always represent the warriors clad in complete armour. Hence we may learn much from them as to how knights and nobles were clad when they went forth to battle long ago, and how changes gradually took place in the shape and fashioning of their arms and armour.

You will find memorials to these old soldiers in many ancient churches. In the church at Danbury, in Essex, for example, there are the figures of three knights, probably of the family of St. Clere, each represented with crossed legs. One is shown in the attitude of prayer, another in the act of drawing his sword, while the third is returning his sword to its sheath. It has been fancifully suggested, that the attitudes may mean that the first died after return from the Crusade; that the knight who is drawing his sword died on his way to the Holy Land; and that the knight who is sheathing his sword died while on his way home. Again, among a number of interesting monuments in Little Horkesley Church, in our county, are the effigies of two knights in chain mail.

No doubt such memorials were once much more numerous than they are at the present day. Many of them were carved in oak and painted, and, during the times when men cared little for the memorials of the past, numbers of them were destroyed as useless lumber. Such was the fate of a wooden figure of a knight in chain mail which formerly occupied a niche in the north wall of Messing Church. A writer in 1845 tells us that

it had been given a few years before by the vicar to the parish clerk to be used as fire-wood !

Though Henry's faithful servant, William de Mandeville, found time to go on crusade in defence of the Holy Cross, the king himself was far too busy to do so. He was

Effigies in Danbury Church

fully occupied in ruling his wide domains, which included half of France as well as England. His love of justice and his restless energy drove him in continual journeys throughout the length and breadth of his lands. Hence his turbulent barons did not know but what the king might, any day, appear before the gates of their castles to demand an account of how they had discharged their trusts. No doubt Henry was often in Essex. We know, for instance, that he paid a visit to Ongar Castle. After

Thomas à Becket had been murdered, in the course of the struggle which the king waged with the Church to bring churchmen also within the scope of the law, Mary, Becket's sister, was made Abbess of Barking. This was one of the acts by which the king sought to show his sorrow for the hasty words which had led to the murder of the great Archbishop.

The story of the lion-hearted king, Richard, who succeeded his father, Henry II, on the throne, is familiar to all. He is the hero of many a story, and especially of Sir Walter Scott's great romances, *Ivanhoe* and *The Talisman*. What a splendid hero he seems! So bold, so brave, and so proud! But brave though he undoubtedly was, loving battle for the mere brute love of fighting, he was a bad king. For he neglected the duty which lay to his hand, and left his kingdom to be the prey of wicked and ambitious men, while he squandered the blood and treasure of his land in a fruitless Crusade.

We must not, however, lose sight of the fact that the Crusades had very important results, though in the end they failed in wresting the Holy Sepulchre from the hands of the Mohammedans. The holy cause of Christ banded together for the first time men of diverse races and tongues whom no other bond could have linked in fellowship. The Crusades, too, helped to prevent the tide of Mohammedan conquest rolling farther over Europe and obscuring the light of Christian religion in large parts of the Continent. They aided, too, the slow growth of knowledge and commerce during the Middle Ages.

Some writers have supposed that the returning Crusaders brought back from the East the dreadful disease, leprosy, which was a frightful scourge in England during the Middle Ages. There is, however, evidence of its existence in our country before the Crusades began. Many hospitals for lepers, or lazar-houses—so-called from St. Lazarus—

existed in England during the Middle Ages. The Hospital of St. Mary at Ilford was founded as a hospital for lepers by the Abbess of Barking in the reign of King Stephen, and there were also hospitals for lepers or others at Colchester, Maldon, Braintree, and other places in the county.

CHAPTER XXIII

KING AND BARONS

THE ESSEX BARONS AND THE GREAT CHARTER

THE lion-hearted king, though his reign brought more trouble than happiness to his country, had nevertheless some noble qualities. He was succeeded by his brother John, one of the falsest and wickedest kings that ever sat upon the throne of England.

But the wickedness and bad government of John brought good out of evil, for it banded together against him all those who loved justice and truth. Therefore, the false king was forced to humble himself and to grant to his subjects that Great Charter which has been so often described as the foundation of English liberties.

In this struggle for justice and good government, the barons of Essex took a very prominent and noble part. The movement against the king owed much of its strength to the wisdom and patriotism of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Stephen Langton; but, on its military side, the Essex barons took a more prominent place in the struggle than the barons of any other county.

The leader of the barons' army was Robert Fitzwalter, Lord of Dunmow in Essex and also of Baynard's Castle in London. Early in John's reign, Fitzwalter had fought for the king in France and had been captured and put

to ransom by the French. But the misgovernment of John soon drove him to plot with other barons to endeavour to bring about a better state of affairs. His plot being discovered, his estates were seized and he himself was driven into exile. After a time, however, he was allowed to return to England and, when the barons as a body could no longer endure the injustice and cruelty and bad government of John, they turned to Fitzwalter as their leader and declared him "Marshal of the Army of God and Holy Church".

The cause of the barons was the cause of all who loved order and good government, and therefore it was favoured by the citizens of London. The army of Fitzwalter was admitted into the city, and he and his son-in-law, Geoffrey de Mandeville, Earl of Essex, busied themselves in repairing the walls and putting the city into a good defensive state. This work was very necessary, for John's forces still held the Tower of London.

But, for the time, John was obliged to bow to the storm. Abandoned by nearly all his followers, he submitted to the terms of the barons and signed the Great Charter on June 15, 1215.

The Great Charter is important not only for its provisions, which ensured a greater measure of liberty and justice for all, but because for the first time we find the great barons uniting not merely for selfish advantage, but for the good of the whole country. In proof of this they pledged themselves to grant to those under them liberties similar to those which they had wrested from the king for themselves.

Many of the barons, however, must have doubted the word of the king. Therefore, they appointed twenty-four of their number to be Guardians of the Charter, to keep the king, if it might be so, to his plighted word. It is a remarkable fact which shows how prominent the Essex

barons had been in opposing the king, that, of these twenty-four guardians, no less than five were barons having their chief seats in the county of Essex. Chief in rank and power among them was Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford, whose great Castle of Hedingham we have already described. Their number also included the head of Fitzwalter's house, the Earl of Clare, who had a castle at Clare in North Essex; while the other three barons were Richard de Montfichet, Lord of Stanstead; John FitzRobert of Clavering; and William de Lanvallei of Colchester.

But the false-hearted John had no intention of keeping the Charter a moment longer than he was obliged. Before the year was out he had gathered a large force, mainly of foreign hired soldiers, and began to waste the lands of the barons far and wide. As the Essex barons had taken so great a part in forcing John to sign the Great Charter, it is not to be wondered at that the county felt the full fury of his vengeance.

His forces laid siege to Geoffrey de Mandeville's Castle of Pleshey on Christmas Eve, 1215. The foreign free-lances, who served under John's banner and whose trade was war, respected neither the Church of God nor the day which, of all others, should bring "peace on earth, good will among men". On Christmas Day itself, even while the monks sang Mass, they burst into Tiltey Abbey, plundered it and destroyed all they could. Far and wide around Pleshey, they burnt and plundered and slew.

Later on, the king's forces besieged Colchester Castle, which was held by a French garrison on behalf of the barons, but they were forced to withdraw on the advance of the army of the barons from London. Only a few weeks later, however, King John himself formed the siege of Colchester Castle and captured it. Thence he marched against

Hedingham Castle, the stronghold of Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford, and that strong place also fell before him.

In their extremity the barons had sought aid from the French, and had even offered the crown to Louis, the eldest son of the King of France. Louis accepted and, after his landing, Essex was smitten by the ravaging of two armies ; John marching through the county burning and plundering the lands of the barons, while on the other side Robert Fitzwalter and William de Mandeville plundered the lands of the king.

The death of the wicked king removed the chief cause of the war. With the young king, Henry III, on the throne, there was hope that misgovernment would cease, and most of the barons, Norman in blood though they were, were by this time sufficiently English in feeling to dislike the idea of a French king ruling over them. So they began to return to their allegiance to the English king ; "the princes" began "to come home again". In the noble words with which Shakespeare ends his play of *King John* :—

> This England never did (nor never shall)
> Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
> But when it first did help to wound itself.
> Now these her princes are come home again,
> Come the three corners of the world in arms,
> And we shall shock them : nought shall make us rue,
> If England to itself do rest but true.

So, after Louis had been driven from England, the country for a time had rest from civil war. But Henry, when he grew to man's estate, proved himself a weak and unwise king, and during the latter part of his long reign, the Barons' War against the king broke out again. The most important event in this war was the summoning to Parliament, in 1265, by Simon de Montfort, of representatives of the cities and boroughs. But, except as

a part of England, Essex was not especially affected by the war; its marchings and its battles for the most part passed the county by unscathed. Among those, however, who were most active upon the barons' side was the greatest of Essex nobles, Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford; and at the Battle of Lewes, which gave De Montfort the chief power for a time, the standard-bearer of the barons' army was Robert de Blund, Lord of Blunts in Essex, who was slain in the battle.

The long reign of Henry III saw a very important movement in the Church, in the coming of the Friars to our country. It is important not to confuse the Friars, who went out among the people preaching, teaching, and tending the sick, with the monks who shut themselves up from the world in their monasteries. The Friars were vowed to poverty, and obtained food and shelter only by begging, and, in the first glow of the movement, they brought about a great revival of religious feeling and did a great amount of good in awakening men to nobler and higher ideals. The two chief orders were the Dominicans, who devoted themselves chiefly to preaching and teaching, and who settled in this county at Colchester in the latter part of the thirteenth century; and the Franciscans, who especially devoted themselves to the care of the poor and sick, and who settled at Chelmsford. The Dominicans and Franciscans were called, from the colour of the robes which they respectively wore, the Black and the Grey Friars. Other orders of Friars who had stations in Essex were the Crutched or Crossed Friars at Colchester, and the Carmelite or White Friars at Maldon.

CHAPTER XXIV

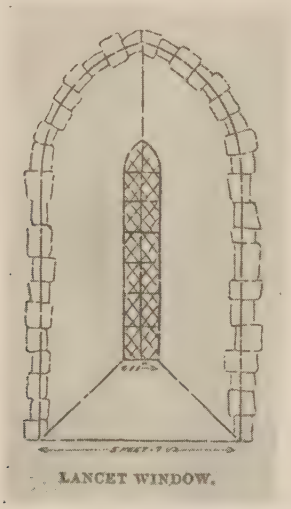
BUILDINGS OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY IN ESSEX

While John and the barons were marching and counter-marching in Essex, and while the nobles in arms against Henry were laying the foundations of the English parliament, the country was not wholly given over to war and bloodshed. All over the land we find buildings of the thirteenth century which show that many were busily occupied in beautiful and enduring work to the honour of God.

These buildings of the thirteenth century should be especially interesting to English people, because they mark the beginning of the style of architecture which is the expression of the native genius of the English and kindred peoples. The Norman method of building, as we have seen, was an outgrowth of the Roman style, but, by the thirteenth century in our land, English builders had learnt to build in a new style, more graceful and beautiful, lighter and yet even stronger than the massive and heavy Norman buildings. This new style of architecture is known as the Gothic, because it began among those races of Northern Europe who were known to the Romans as Goths. Another name is the Pointed style, used because the characteristic arches of the building, whether of nave, windows, doors, or other parts of the building, are not round like the Norman, but come to a sharp point. Buildings of the thirteenth century in England mark the beginning of this Gothic or Pointed style, and hence the style of architecture followed during that century is generally known as the Early English or Early Pointed style.

The windows of this style are long and narrow, and because they are sharp-pointed at the top, like a surgeon's

lancet, they are called lancet windows. At first they were placed singly in the walls, but later they were set in groups of two or three. Besides the change in the shape of the arches there were other important changes in the buildings. Thus, the thick, solid column with squat,



LANCET WINDOW, WILLINGALE SPAIN CHURCH

cushion-shaped capital, which we find in Norman buildings, gave way to more graceful and slender columns, often of small shafts grouped around a larger central shaft, capped by a graceful bell-shaped capital. Buttresses and pinnacles, by balancing weight against weight, enabled the builders to obtain greater lightness of construction without loss of strength. Carving and ornament, too, became more beautiful and more finely executed.

Perhaps because the parishes had been so well supplied with churches in Norman times, there are few churches in

Essex which are wholly or largely built in the Early English style. Where alterations or additions, however, were necessary, they were carried out in the new style, and there is no lack of examples of such work in the county, though it is generally rather plain in character.

The Chapel of St. Nicholas, Little Coggeshall Abbey, was built early in the thirteenth century and stands to-day practically unaltered. It is especially remarkable because the arches and jambs (sides) of the windows are built of *brick*. It will, perhaps, at first sight appear that there is nothing remarkable in the use of brick, for nearly all Essex houses are now built of that material, and we have spoken, earlier in this book, of Roman bricks. But after the Romans left Britain, the art of brick-making died out in our country, and though the old Roman bricks or tiles were often used as building material, no new bricks were made for many centuries. Now the brickwork in the Chapel of St. Nicholas is generally believed to date from the actual time of building. If so, it is the earliest example of the revival of the art of brick-making, not only in Essex, but in the whole of England. This re-discovery was, of course, enormously important, especially in a county like Essex, where there was a plentiful supply of clay for brick-making, but scarcely any other building material except timber. It was not, however, till some centuries later that buildings of brick became common. Hence, while castles were stout and strong, and churches both strong and beautiful, ordinary people had still to be content with houses of wood or with mere huts of wattle and daub.

One of the characteristic ornaments of the Early English style is the dog-tooth ornament, which the picture will help you to recognize. You will find it, for instance, in the Chapter House of Beeleigh Abbey, near Maldon.

Among examples of Early English work in the churches of Essex are the south doorways at Doddinghurst and

Little Leighs and the east window at Rettendon. In the Church of St. Augustine, Birdbrook, may be noticed the adaptation of Norman architecture to the Early English style.

In the chancels of some of our churches we find the recesses with drains in which the sacred vessel was washed after the Mass. Such a recess is called a piscina, and

Dog-tooth Ornament

Early English piscinas exist in the churches at Barnstone, Elsenham, and Rettendon. In the chancel of the church of the latter village is an example, in the Early English style, of the stone seats called sedilia. These were for the use of the priests who took part in the celebration of the Mass.

CHAPTER XXV

THE THREE EDWARDS

The wars between king and barons had brought England two great advances upon the path of free and orderly government, the Great Charter and the beginnings of representative government. Fortunately Edward I, who followed his father, Henry III, on the throne, was a wise and able ruler. Though, as the first prince of the blood royal, he had of course fought against De Montfort, yet, as king, he adopted what was best in his enemy's measures. During his reign the land had relief under the rule of one of her greatest kings, a man of purer and

better life than Henry II, but, like him, a strong ruler and a lover of justice. During Edward's reign, however, Essex had no especial part to play in the king's great enterprises outside the kingdom, the conquest of Wales and the invasions and occupation of Scotland. The mortal remains of the great king on their last sad journey, however, rested for awhile on Essex soil. He died as he was leading his army against the Scots, just as he had reached the borders of Scotland, and when his body was brought south to be buried at Westminster it rested for some time in the Abbey Church at Waltham. At an earlier date the remains of Edward's beloved wife, Eleanor, had also rested awhile at Waltham. There the king erected one of the "Eleanor Crosses" which marked the stopping-places of the body on its journey from Lincoln to London.

Neither does the county come into any especial prominence in the story of the reign of the slothful and self-indulgent King Edward II, whose shameful reign was closed by his murder through the orders of his wicked wife, Isabella, the "she-wolf of France". It was upon his descent from Isabella that her son, Edward III, founded his claim to the throne of France. The long "Hundred Years' War" between England and France thus broke out. Then followed the great exploits of Edward III and of the Black Prince, "the mirror of chivalry," and their famous victories at Crécy and Poitiers.

In these campaigns, we know that the men of Essex bore their part, for old records tell us that, for the campaign of Crécy, Essex was called upon to furnish two hundred archers, while the chief towns of the county had to supply armed foot-soldiers, Colchester to the number of twenty, Chelmsford four, Braintree four, Saffron Walden six, and Waltham Holy Cross four. These proportions probably tell us the relative importance of these Essex towns

during the time of Edward III. In those days the chief ports appear to have been Colchester, Harwich, Brightlingsea, and Maldon, for these towns received orders to send all their ships of thirty tons and upwards to Portsmouth. To the Siege of Calais in 1347, Harwich is said to have sent fourteen ships and 283 seamen, while Colchester supplied five ships and 170 sailors.

Evil as the French war begun by Edward III was in many of its results, it yet had a very valuable result in completing the welding together of Norman knight and Saxon yeoman in one common English nationality. Crécy was the first of those remarkable victories in which the mail-clad chivalry of the Continent went down before the prowess of the English archers. Side by side with them fought the chivalry of England, the descendants of the Norman nobles, no longer regarding themselves as conquerors in a strange land which they ruled with a rod of iron, but as fellow-countrymen of the yeomen whom they led, and who bore themselves so worthily on many a hard-fought field.

The wars of the Middle Ages produced a great number of men who made a horrible trade of war, selling their swords to the side which would pay them best, without any regard to the right or justice of the quarrel, and living on the fruits of bloodshed and rapine. Such "soldiers of fortune" or "freelances" were the foreign hireling soldiers with which King John had harried the lands of the Essex nobles.

One of the most remarkable of the freelances of the Middle Ages was a product of Edward III's French wars, and was a native of Hedingham Sible in Essex, a manor which his family held for a long time. His name was Sir John Hawkwood. The great historian Hallam calls him the first distinguished commander who appeared in Europe since the destruction of the Roman Empire.

Hawkwood learnt the trade of war in Edward III's army, in which he is said to have served as an archer. By 1359, three years after the Black Prince's great victory of Poitiers, he was at the head of a troop of freelances in Gascony, where he and his men lived by the pillage of the country.

But Italy, then divided among a number of states existing in a state of almost continual warfare, offered a favourable field for soldiers of fortune, and thither Hawkwood and his freelances made their way. For many years from this time onward, Hawkwood took part in the Italian wars, now on this side, now on that, according to the custom of the soldiers of fortune, but mainly in the service of the state of Florence, by which he was held in high honour.

In Italy Sir John Hawkwood won great renown by the vigour and daring of his methods of warfare. His men were known, probably from the fineness of their equipment, as "The White Company," and soon numbered 1,000 lances and 2,000 footmen. A "lance" did not, in this case, mean a single spearman, but three horsemen; the first, a fully armoured knight; the second, a more lightly armoured squire; the third, a page mounted upon a lighter horse than the chargers of the knight and squire. A curious feature of the weapons of the men of the White Company was the use of a very long and ponderous lance, so ponderous indeed, that it took two men to hold it, and could only be used on foot. Held in this manner, the lances presented a long line of steel points which formed a terrible obstacle to an enemy's attack. Probably Hawkwood recruited his famous White Company largely from friends and neighbours in his native county. We read, at any rate, of one of his lieutenants under the name of John Brise of Essex, the ancestor of the Ruggles-Brises of to-day.

Evidently the great captain of freelances was a firm

believer in the formidable weapon which won so many English battles, the stout long-bow of good English yew, for both horse and foot bore bows in addition to swords and daggers. The footmen used a bow of especial power and length, one end of it being stuck in the ground when the string was about to be drawn.

For many years Hawkwood led his men in Italy, fighting many battles, and sacking many towns. He died in that country, but later his widow obtained leave to bring back his remains to his native Essex, and they were probably laid to rest in Hedingham Sible Church.

CHAPTER XXVI

ESSEX UNDER EDWARD THE THIRD

The reign of Edward III is important not merely on account of its battles and sieges, but also on account of several events of great importance to Essex and to England generally, which occurred in the course of it. The first of these was the introduction of a peaceful and useful manufacture, of which Essex became one of the chief seats; the second, a terrible scourge which fell upon the land, and which produced profound changes in the social conditions of the people; and the third, a movement to reform abuses in the Church.

For a very long period Essex, in common with England as a whole, had been famous for the amount and the fine quality of the wool which it produced and which formed the chief article of its commerce. During this time, Flanders and the Low Countries were the great seats of the woollen manufacture, far excelling other districts of Northern Europe in the quality and beauty of the fabrics they produced. There was, therefore, a trade connexion

of long standing between the two countries. Flanders was the chief customer for the wool which England produced, and in consequence, many Flemish merchants settled in the English ports.

It was believed, however, that it would be a great gain to England if her people could themselves manufacture into cloth the wool which her pastures produced, instead of first selling it to the Flemings and then buying back the finished product from them. With the object of encouraging this home manufacture, a number of laws were passed, especially during the reign of Edward III, forbidding the exportation of wool. These laws were, no doubt, often evaded, and much English wool was, in defiance of them, smuggled into the ports of Flanders; but they had the important result of inducing numbers of Flemish weavers to settle down in England, where a supply of the best material for their looms, and also a market for the sale of their cloth awaited them.

Hence England received, during the reign of Edward III, the most important addition of foreigners to her population that had taken place since the Norman Conquest. The Flemings were a skilful and highly intelligent people, and they became very valuable citizens of their adopted country. Indeed, we may well date the beginning of the importance of England as a manufacturing country to the settlement of the Flemings during the fourteenth century.

Two considerations would be likely to influence the new-comers in their choice of a place in which to settle: its nearness to their own country, and the abundance of its supply of wool. Essex was favourable to their objects in both these respects, and consequently, it was one of the counties most affected by the settlement of the Flemings. Thus the county became one of the chief seats of the early manufacture of woollen goods in England.

The foreign workmen set up their hand-looms and plied their useful trade in many Essex towns and villages, at Colchester, Braintree, Halstead, Coggeshall, and Bocking, among others. Even to-day a certain "foreign" appearance which may be noticed in some Essex churches, as for example, in the tower of Fryerning Church, is supposed to be due to the influence of the Flemings who settled in the county at various periods, beginning with the time of Edward III.

Thus the reign of Edward III saw the beginning of the manufacturing importance of Essex. But in the same reign, only a few years after the great victory of Crécy, the most terrible pestilence that has ever smitten our country, the Black Death of 1349, fell upon the land. For two years the plague had been advancing from the East across Europe, and when it reached England, high and low, rich and poor, fell in thousands before its dread attacks. Two Archbishops of Canterbury died of the plague in one year; whole families were cut off, whole villages abandoned, and it is believed that perhaps a third of the people of the country perished of the disease. As we shall see later, the Black Death had an important place among the causes leading up to a great rising in which the men of Essex bore a leading part. Among the many Essex victims of the Black Death was Robert de Bourchier, who had fought by the side of the Black Prince at Crécy, and whose monument still stands in Halstead Church.

To the miseries arising from pestilence and war, there was added in the minds of many thoughtful people a great discontent with the lives of numbers of the clergy. The higher clergy held most of the great offices of the state, and enormous wealth had passed into the hands of the various orders of monks and friars. Hence there had arisen worldliness and corruption among the clergy,

many of whom, men said, so far from being the servants of God and His Church, led selfish and even vicious lives. It is easy to gather from the writings of Langland and of our first great English poet, Chaucer, who lived about this time, the contempt into which many of the clergy had fallen on account of their worldly and evil lives. Hence there arose a great movement under John Wycliffe to purify the Church from the abuses which were sapping its power and influence. This movement seems to have been especially active in Essex, where a number of priests, who supported the teaching of Wycliffe, laboured among the people.

CHAPTER XXVII

BUILDINGS OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY IN ESSEX

Under the three Edwards the new style of architecture, which began in the thirteenth century, was perfected, and buildings of their time are in what is known as the Middle Pointed or Decorated Gothic style. The latter name is the one usually adopted, and expresses the fact that the style grew out of the Early English and is especially marked by the beauty of its decorations.

We have seen that the single lancet windows of the Early English style came afterwards to be grouped together in twos or threes. These had above them a single arch, and the space between the windows and the arch was often pierced with smaller windows. From this arrangement grew the design of the beautiful windows of the Decorated style. In these a single large window is divided into compartments, corresponding to the lancet windows, by upright stone bars or mullions, while the arched top of the window is occupied by designs separated by curved bars. This arrangement of designs

is known as "tracery", and at first, only such figures as could be made by rule and compass were formed. Later, however, the tracery took wavy, flowing lines. This is known as "flowing tracery". The workmanship of this period is often exceedingly beautiful, and the carving of leaves and fruit and flowers in stone marvellously well done. A very common ornament of the time, in many parts of England, is the "ball-flower", a circular flower with a trefoil opening enclosing another ball, but this ornament is rare in Essex.

Perhaps the finest Decorated window in the county is the east window at Tiltey, and there is another fine east window at Great Stapleford Church, which also contains other good Decorated windows. Great Dunmow Church has a fine Decorated east window. Its chancel is also of this time, as is the splendid restored chancel of Lawford Church. The nave arcade of the beautiful church at Thaxted and the north aisle at Danbury are in the Decorated style. The tower of the parish church of West Ham dates from this period. A feature of many of these churches is the piscina, or drain in which the sacred vessel was washed after Mass, and the sedilia, or stone seats for the clergy. You will find these, in the Decorated style, at Tiltey, Great Stapleford, Bulmer, and other places.

A very interesting feature of the churches of this period is found in the memorial brasses, which came to be placed upon the floors of the churches or upon altar-tombs in memory of dead persons of importance. These brasses are very interesting because in them the people, nobles or knights or squires or ladies, are represented in the armour or the dress that they wore during life. Hence we can learn from them, better than we could learn from any written description, how knights and ladies dressed in the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries. Not only are the brasses

interesting, they are also often exceedingly beautiful. They are well drawn and engraved and, originally, they were decorated with coloured enamels. Like the beautiful Decorated buildings and the wonderful illuminated books of the monks, which you may see in the British Museum Library and other places, they show us what wonderfully skilful craftsmen our ancestors in the Middle

Tiltey Abbey

Ages were, how patiently and lovingly and with what a sense of beauty they carried out their work.

These memorial brasses are very numerous in Essex; indeed, in this respect the county is almost, if not quite, the richest in England. Besides the hundreds that still exist, the hollow spaces in the stones from which others have been torn by foolish or selfish hands in the past, show that they must once have been numbered in

thousands. If you examine the floors of Saffron Walden or Thaxted Churches, for instance, you will see that at one time those churches must have been almost paved with brasses.

Piscina and Sedilia, Fifield

The earliest of those left in Essex is at Pebmarsh. It represents a knight of the time of Edward II and is one of the finest early brasses in England. Another beautiful brass at Chrishall represents Sir John de la Pole, a knight of Edward III's time, and his wife. The knight is clad in armour of mixed plate and chain mail, and the brass

shows us how the warriors of the Third Edward's time were equipped for the campaigns in France. There are other fourteenth-century brasses at Bowers Gifford, Aveley, South Ockendon, and Shopland.

The Swynborne Brass, Little Horkesley Church

But the most splendid of the Essex brasses, and one of the finest in the whole of England, is in the church at Little Horkesley. It lies upon an altar tomb and represents Sir Robert Swynborne, who died in 1391, and Sir Thomas Swynborne, who died in 1412. The work-

manship of the figures of the knights and of the decorated canopy by which they are surmounted is very fine. It is interesting to notice the differences in the armour of the two knights. Sir Robert wears armour of mixed chain-mail and plate, very much like that of Sir John de la Pole at Chrishall, but Sir Thomas is clad in a complete suit of the plate armour which was worn in the fifteenth century. The brass shows, too, that as a servant of Henry IV, Sir Thomas, who, the inscription on the brass tells us, was Mayor of Bordeaux and Captain of Ffronsak in France, wears a badge of the House of Lancaster, the collar of S.S.

Such a brass as this brings before us the long-dead knights, the soldiers of Poitiers and Agincourt in " their habit as they lived ", and should help us to realize more fully the great names of history, not as mere names, but as actual living men who played their parts in the great drama of life.

An effigy of brass
Trodden by careless feet
Of worshippers that pass,
Beautiful and complete.

It shows a warrior arm'd:
Across his iron breast
His hands by death are charmed
To leave his sword at rest.

Would we could teach our sons
His trust in face of doom,
Or give our bravest ones
A comparable tomb.—Robert Bridges.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE GREAT REVOLT IN ESSEX. PART I

We have read how the Black Death, during the reign of Edward III, swept off a great proportion of the people of England. Great numbers of the labouring classes perished, and the land in many places lay waste for lack of men to cultivate it. Labour being scarce, wages, of course, naturallyt ended to rise, because the landowners were forced to pay well or leave their fields untilled and unproductive. But at this time Parliament was almost entirely composed of landowners, and to protect their interests they passed a Statute of Labourers, forbidding the hirer from paying or the labourer from demanding higher wages than had been paid before the time of the Black Death. Moreover, this wage was reckoned at the lowest possible rate. It is no wonder that the Statute of Labourers, which was re-enacted several times, was the cause of great discontent among the tillers of the soil, who saw themselves robbed by it of the due return for their labours, although it is true that, in spite of the statutes, wages increased.

Moreover, a great deal of discontent had for a long time been growing up among a great class of the tillers of the soil—the "villeins". During feudal times the whole of England was divided into manors. In each of these, a large portion of the land was held by the Lord of the Manor; other portions on some manors were held by freemen; there was some common land, and the rest was divided amongst the villeins. These villeins were tied to the soil and not free to move from place to place to get better conditions. They were largely in the power of their lord, whom they paid for the land they held, not by a fixed money payment or rent, but by certain

dues and by certain fixed labours which they had to perform upon his lands. It can scarcely be supposed that the villeins were ever well satisfied with their lot, and their discontent became more and more marked during the latter part of the reign of Edward III. Moreover, the scarcity of labour after the Black Death doubtless induced many of the lords to exact to the uttermost their rights of forced labour from the villeins. Nor was the discontent of the common people confined to the dwellers in the country-side. As trade increased in the towns, masters tended to employ greater numbers of workmen who had little hope of one day becoming masters themselves, and who considered that the masters ruled matters in the towns entirely in their own interests and against the interests of their workmen. Moreover, there was a great jealousy and dislike of the foreigners, such as the Flemings in Essex, who as merchants or manufacturers had settled in the towns.

The government, too, was very unpopular. The wars of Edward III had left a heavy burden of debt, and all hope of final success had long disappeared. When the old king was dead and the boy-king Richard II sat upon the throne, the hopeless war still went on and the king's ministers found themselves in desperate straits to provide the money. The people blamed the government both for the failures in the war and for the heavy taxation which it caused.

Most historians tell us that the teachings of Wycliffe and his followers, " The Poor Preachers ", who attacked the Pope, the friars, and the worldliness of the clergy, had a good deal to do with increasing the discontent of the people and causing it to burst into the flame of rebellion. Professor Oman, however, in his *Great Revolt of 1381*, shows that religion had little to do with the rebellion. It is, however, true that John Ball, a priest of Colchester,

had for some years been preaching to the people up and down the land, telling them that all men were equal, and stirring up discontent. But John Ball, who in 1381 was lying in prison for his teachings, had no connexion with Wycliffe.

In 1381, the Parliament, in order to provide money, passed a Poll-tax which was intended to raise the sum of one shilling a head on every person in the country over fifteen years of age. There was an arrangement that in each township or village the rich should pay more than the poor, but in many places, where there were few or no rich people, the whole shilling had to be found by even very poor folk. This was a great injustice, and, to escape payment, many places sent in false returns, leaving out from the list the names of many of their women-folk. When the government found out the cheat, they sent out officers into the counties to force the people to pay in full, and to find out those who had sent in false returns. On this errand, one of the king's officers rode down to Brentwood one day towards the end of May, 1381, and summoned the fishermen and peasants of the villages of Fobbing and Corringham, in the Essex marshland, to appear before him. They came in an angry mood, plainly told the king's officer that they would not pay a penny more, and ended by beating the officer and his servants and stoning them out of the town.

At once the smouldering fires of discontent burst into a flame, and in all directions messengers called the peasants of Essex to arms. When one of the king's judges came down to Brentwood to punish the rioters he was set upon by an armed multitude. Some of his helpers were murdered, and their heads, stuck on poles, were paraded about the streets of the town. Next day, the rebellion broke out in Kent, whither the news of the doings at Brentwood had been carried, and soon after, some of the

Essex men crossed the river from Barking to join their fellows in Kent. A dreadful time of lawlessness, of murder and destruction, now set in. Manor houses were burnt, the rolls which recorded the services of the villeins were destroyed, and unpopular servants of the government murdered. The manor houses of Coggeshall, Peldon, and other places were plundered; Flemings were murdered at Colchester and Manningtree; every document of the Abbey of Waltham was burnt to ashes.

After some days of pillage and murder the rebels of Essex and Kent, in two great bodies, began a disorderly march upon London. The men of Kent were under the leadership of Wat Tyler. Nothing is known of Tyler before he sprang into importance as the leader of the Kentish men. In several documents of the time, however, he is spoken of as "Walter Tyler of Essex" or "of Colchester", so that it is possible that he was one of the Essex men who crossed over into Kent. With the Kentish men, too, went the priest John Ball, whom the rebels had released from prison, and who preached to his riotous followers from the text:—

> When Adam dalf and Eve span,
> What was then a gentilman?

Another of the leaders was Jack Straw, also a priest, who appears both in Kent and in Essex.

PART II

While the men of Kent advanced on London, the Essex rebels also poured westward along the great London road, through Romford and Ilford and Stratford, to a camp which they formed at Mile End. In this threatening state of affairs King Richard, who lay in the Tower of London with but a small garrison, had no means of defending the city. True the drawbridge on

London Bridge and the city gates and walls might have given the rebels much trouble, but treachery was at work. Aldermen of London, in sympathy with the revolt, were false to their trust. The Kentish men poured into London over the bridge, the Essex men through Aldgate, and, without a blow being struck, London was in the hands of the mob. Helpless within the walls of the Tower, the king and his council saw the flames of the Palace of the Savoy and of the Priory of St. John's lighting up the sky.

Next day the boy-king, attended by some of his nobles, amongst whom was the young Earl of Oxford, afterwards so hated as the king's favourite, left the Tower and, by arrangement, met the rebels in conference in the fields at Mile End. Richard granted all the demands of the insurgents. Villeinage was to be abolished. The villeins were to become free tenants, paying a small rent per acre instead of service, and they were to be free to buy and sell in the markets. Moreover, all were to be pardoned for taking part in the rebellion.

Rejoicing in their new-won freedom, great numbers of the rebels returned to their homes. But many, with the pillage of the richest city in the land within their grasp, were not to be pacified so easily. Indeed, while Richard was parleying with the rebels at Mile End, a party of the insurgents had burst into the Tower. There they found the king's Chancellor, Archbishop Sudbury, and the Treasurer, Sir Robert Hales, whose house at Cressing Temple, in Essex, had been destroyed by the rebels some days before. The insurgents regarded these two statesmen as their special foes. They were dragged forth and beheaded on Tower Hill.

The conference at Mile End had therefore failed to rid London of the mob. Indeed, the city was now at the mercy of the fiercest and worst of the insurgents,

because the more peaceable and reasonable had returned to their homes. Under Tyler and Jack Straw, pillage, arson and murder flourished unchecked. Blocks were set up in the streets and upon them many innocent persons, lawyers, and the hated Flemings and others, died by the axe.

After some time of dreadful disorder, another meeting was arranged to take place at Smithfield, just outside the city walls. All along one side of the wide open space were ranged the rebels drawn up in order. On the other side appeared King Richard and his followers, about two hundred men in all, wearing armour under their long robes.

Tyler rode out in front of his men, with a follower carrying his banner, in order to meet the king in the open space. He made impossible demands and bore himself in a swaggering, unmannerly fashion. As he was remounting his horse to rejoin his men, Tyler heard one of the followers of the king declare that he recognized the rebel as a notorious thief. After some angry words, Tyler unsheathed his dagger and pressed in among the king's men to strike the follower who had spoken. Walworth, the Mayor of London, thereupon thrust his horse forward to bar the way. Tyler stabbed at him, and in an instant, the mayor, whose armour had saved him from injury, had drawn his sword and wounded the rebel in the shoulder. As he sank on his horse's neck, one of the king's squires ran him twice through the body. Crying " Treason ", the dying leader rode a space towards his men and then fell dead from his horse.

Instantly the long-bows of the rebel host were unslung, arrows fitted to the bowstrings, and the fate of the king and his followers trembled in the balance. But, before the deadly flight of arrows darkened the air, the king, with a presence of mind and calm courage extraordinary

in one so young, and worthy of the son of the Black Prince, took probably the only step that could have saved the lives of himself and of his followers. Riding out into the open space with right hand uplifted, he called to the rebels, "Would you shoot your king? Follow me into the fields. I myself will be your chief and captain." So saying, he rode slowly towards the fields of Clerkenwell, and the rebels, dazed by the rapid events of the last few moments, followed sullenly in his wake.

While the boy-king, in peril of his life, headed the insurgents northward, Walworth hurried back into the city. Hastily summoning the forces of the city wards and being joined by the few trained soldiers in the town, he quickly collected an army of several thousand men. Soon the banners of the wards marched out through Smithfield and spread out to right and left on the flanks of the rebels, now a mere disorderly rabble. Meanwhile, a body of the Royalist men-at-arms forced its way through the press and ranged itself behind the king. The rebels were now at Richard's mercy, but he spared them and gave them leave to depart.

The power of the insurgents was broken, the courage of Richard and the energy of Walworth and the loss of their leader had transformed the host which had held London in terror into a frightened mob, hurrying to seek safety in the hovels of their native towns and villages.

A number of the leaders, Jack Straw, John Ball, and others, suffered death as soon as they were caught. Meanwhile, a great many of the nobles and gentry, including the king's uncle, Thomas of Woodstock, had ridden to London to support the throne. The king was now strong enough to disregard the promises he had made at Mile End. At the head of an army, he rode into Essex to stamp out the last embers of the rebellion in that

county. "Villeins ye are still, and villeins ye shall remain," he told the peasants at Waltham.

But the Essex men were not yet utterly broken in spirit. When they found that the king's promises were to be as naught, numbers of them mustered near Chelmsford and took up a position at Billericay, where their flanks were protected by ditches and by a barricade of carts chained together. The vanguard of the royal army, under Thomas of Woodstock, the lord of Pleshey Castle, attacked them here, burst through their defences and killed, we are told, five hundred of the peasants. The rest fled into the wood and dispersed, except a few scattered bands, one of which was destroyed by Lord Fitzwalter as it marched northward.

The Essex Rebellion was at an end. Richard reached Chelmsford, where he formally revoked the charters, and the king's judges set to work to punish those who had taken part in the insurrection. Many historians say that great numbers were executed—one account says 7,000—but it has now been shown that this is a great exaggeration, and that the probable number is low in the three figures instead of high in four.

The bold stroke of the peasants had failed. But the Rebellion of 1381 is of great importance because it is the first occasion in our history on which the common people had dared to strike a blow against their masters for what they conceived to be right and justice. Perhaps the part which they and their fathers had played with bow and bill on the battle-fields of France had helped to embolden them against their mail-clad masters. But, for the time, the revolt had failed. "Villeins they were, and villeins they remained," servants of a system which the nation had outgrown. And because the times were outgrowing villeinage, the efforts of king and lords to maintain it were, in the long run, unavailing. Before

the end of the Wars of the Roses villeinage in England had practically, though not entirely, ceased to exist.

Just as the Essex barons risked all in their struggle with King John, so the Essex peasants risked all they had, their lives and liberty, in a struggle against a harsh and unjust system. Well may we honour those, mail-clad knight or leathern-jerkined peasant, who played men's parts in two of the great struggles that mark the gradual growth of English freedom.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE TREACHEROUS KING

The reign of the king who had broken his word to the poor peasants was one of trouble and disturbance. The extravagant rule of the king and his favourites was strongly opposed by many of the barons, led by the king's uncle, Thomas, Duke of Gloucester. One of the chief of the favourites of Richard was the great Essex lord, De Vere, Earl of Oxford, whom the king made Duke of Ireland. He was in command of the king's forces which were defeated at Radcot Bridge by the barons in 1387, and, flying the country, died shortly afterwards in exile. Ten years later, the king determined to get rid of his enemies by crafty and treacherous means. His uncle, Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, who, you will remember, defeated the Essex peasants in the fight of Billericay, was the leader of the king's opponents and was lord of the Essex castle of Pleshey. You will remember that Pleshey was originally the chief seat of the De Mandevilles, Earls of Essex. When the male line of the De Mandevilles died out in the thirteenth century, the earldom and the castle of Pleshey passed by marriage into the hands of the great west-country family of the

De Bohuns. From them, Thomas of Woodstock had obtained possession of the castle by marriage with their heiress.

Thus it came to pass that the Duke of Gloucester was living in his Essex castle in the autumn of 1397, while his nephew the king was staying at his palace of Havering-atte-Bower, some twenty miles or so distant. Here the king laid a crafty plot for the seizure and murder of his uncle.

Leaving his palace at Havering one September day, as if to hunt in the neighbouring forest, Richard with some followers rode across country and in the evening presented himself before his uncle's castle just as the duke was finishing supper. Hurried preparations were at once made to entertain the royal hunting party. After the king had taken food, he requested his host to have a few horses saddled and to ride with him at once to London, there to confer with others upon important matters of state. Apparently the duke had no suspicion of the trap into which he was being led, for, with only a few attendants, he joined the king's party and all set off Londonwards.

Striking into the great highway to the city, they rode through Romford and Ilford until they were approaching Stratford. Here the king and his followers took the lead and rode on some distance in advance of the duke. Their passage, no doubt, gave the signal to an ambush of soldiers, under Mowbray, the Earl Marshal, which lay in wait in the darkness by the side of the road, near one of the lanes leading from the Romford Road southward to the River Thames. We cannot say which of a number of old lanes, now all busy roads, this was. It may have been White Post Lane, now High Street, East Ham; or Red Post Lane, now Catherine Road; or the Green Lane, now Green Street, or one of the other lanes between Ilford

and Stratford. Green Street, which forms the boundary between West and East Ham, seems the most likely place, because in those days Ham Creek, long ago filled up, extended from the river to a point near the present West Ham Football Ground. This is only a short distance from the Romford Road, so that it would have been easy for Mowbray's soldiers to hurry the duke down the Green Lane to Ham Creek and on board a boat beyond reach of pursuit and rescue.

As the duke passed, the ambushed soldiers rushed from their hiding-places, seized him and hurried him down the lane to the waterside. There he was put on board ship and carried off to Calais, where shortly afterwards he died—of apoplexy, it was given out, but probably, as all men said, foully murdered by being smothered.

King Richard got rid of others of his enemies by imprisonment, by banishment, and by execution, and for the time appeared triumphant. But only two years afterwards, Henry of Lancaster, his cousin, who had been amongst those banished by the king, landed in the country. So many of the clergy, the nobles, and the commons supported him that the throne of Richard fell almost without a blow, and Henry of Lancaster became king as Henry IV.

CHAPTER XXX

THE RIVAL ROSES

No events of especial importance connect the history of Essex with the general history of England during the reigns of the kings of the House of Lancaster. We read, indeed, among the many schemes against Henry IV, of a plot arranged by the Countess of Oxford and the abbots of the Abbeys of Colchester, Beeleigh, and St. Osyth,

but the plot came to nothing. Essex men, too, bore their part in the glorious but fruitless campaigns of Henry V in France. Henry VI's wife, Queen Margaret, was the owner of Pleshey Castle, and spent much of her time hunting in the Essex forests.

Fortunately, the battles and marchings of the Wars of the Roses passed the county by. It is important to remember that these terrible wars were mainly the concern of the barons and their followers, and that the great bulk of the people took little part in them, though the important towns, Colchester for example, generally favoured the Yorkist cause. During the long years of slaughter on the battle-field and on the block, the old feudal nobility was almost exterminated, and way was made for a new order of things and a new social system.

The Essex nobles, like the nobles of the rest of England, were divided between the two houses of York and Lancaster. The great house of De Vere never wavered in its support of the Red Rose. In many of the battles of the war, the Essex bowmen and men-at-arms who followed the standard of the Lord of Hedingham played an important part. Essex archers, in the train of the Irish Earl of Ormond, who held great estates in Essex and other parts of the south of England, died by hundreds upon the bloody field of Towton, where the Yorkists won the great victory which established Edward IV upon the throne. After this battle, John de Vere, the twelfth Earl of Oxford, was beheaded.

One of those strange accidents which sometimes turn the fortune of battle decided the fate of the Battle of Barnet, which re-seated Edward IV upon the throne after he had been driven from England by the great Earl of Warwick, known as the Kingmaker. This strange accident was a mistake between the badges of De Vere and of Edward IV.

The two armies met on the field of Barnet in the early morning of a foggy Easter Day. On the side of Warwick and the House of Lancaster, the Earl of Oxford brought four thousand men into the field. Now, according to an ancient legend, when old Earl Aubrey de Vere was fighting in the Crusades in the Holy Land, a star miraculously fell upon his shield. Therefore the De Veres bore upon their shield a five-pointed star, called by heralds a mullet, and the followers of the Earl of Oxford at Barnet bore upon their armour or coats the badge of their lord, a shining star. The badge borne by the soldiers of Edward IV was a sun with rays, the "Sun of York", of which Shakespeare speaks, and in the fog of that dismal Easter Day, it was easy to confuse the radiant star and the shining sun. At Barnet, Oxford and his men were on the right wing of the Lancastrian army. At the very beginning of the fight they utterly broke and routed the Yorkist wing opposed to them. The Yorkists fled, and Oxford furiously pursued them for a mile or more, cutting down the fugitives in the streets of Barnet town itself. Then the earl turned to help his comrades, who were desperately engaged with the rest of the Yorkist army. But in the dense fog it was not easy to collect his men, and much time was lost before his troops began to feel their way back to the battle, guided by the horrid tumult of the fray.

Thus it came about that Oxford completely lost his way, and reached the battlefield in the rear of his own army, having in the mist worked right round the contending forces. As his men emerged through the fog, Warwick's reserves mistook the star of the De Veres upon the standards and armour of Oxford's men for the sun of York, and greeted them with a shower of arrows and a furious onslaught. The mistake was fatal. The attack by his own comrades in arms seemed to Oxford another of the treasons which had disgraced these cruel and

treacherous wars, and crying, "Treason", he and his followers fled northwards, leaving the Kingmaker to die upon the field.

Other Essex men fought in this same battle upon the winning side. To the army of Edward IV, the Bourchiers, the family to which the earldom of Essex had passed, led seven thousand men. In the church of Little Easton you may see the brass of Henry Bourchier, Earl of Essex, and his countess. The earl wears the Collar of the Suns and Roses, a Yorkist badge originated by Edward IV.

In exile and disgrace, the De Veres did not abandon the cause of Lancaster. When the Earl of Richmond was planning his invasion of England, the Earl of Oxford was his chief helper in France, and he fought in the final battle of the Wars of the Roses, the Battle of Bosworth Field. There Richard III was slain, and the crown passed to Henry Tudor, Earl of Richmond, who became Henry VII.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERN TIMES

The accession of Henry VII marks the close of the Middle Ages in England. The Wars of the Roses had given a fatal blow to the old feudal nobility, and the trading classes and townsfolk were rapidly rising in importance. The sovereigns of the House of Tudor, too, were strong and able, though arbitrary rulers, and depended a great deal upon the support of the middle and trading classes. Henry VII was determined to keep the power of the nobles from ever again reaching such a height as it had attained during the Middle Ages. The power of the barons had been largely based upon the private armies of retainers, dressed in their uniforms or

liveries, which they had maintained. So long as a great earl could lead into the field an army of many thousand soldiers, the peace of the country was never sure, and moreover, many thousands of men were withdrawn from peaceful and useful pursuits. Henry VII therefore set himself to enforce strictly laws intended to prevent the great nobles from keeping these private armies.

He gave a proof that no man, however high in rank, and however great his services to the king, would be allowed to break these laws. As we have seen, no man had fought more strenuously, or worked more faithfully, for the House of Lancaster and for Henry VII himself, than the Earl of Oxford. Perhaps the earl thought that services so great as his had been would justify him in setting the law at defiance. Therefore, when the king came to visit him at Hedingham Castle, he received his royal guest with great state and display, and the king passed into the great Hall through long lines of men, clad in the livery of the earl, and wearing his badge of the radiant star.

"Are all these men your servants, my lord?" asked the king.

"No, sire, they are my retainers," replied the earl.

"I thank you for your entertainment," said the king, "but I cannot allow my laws to be broken before my very eyes."

So the earl had to pay a fine of £10,000, and though the action of the king seems ungrateful, yet it is quite right that no man should be allowed to set himself up above the law.

This John, thirteenth Earl of Oxford, seems, by the way, to have been very fond of display. We read that, at his death, he left directions that there should be given away for mourning "black gowns to the number of nine hundred or more".

The Tudor period marks also the time when the remark-

able awakening of interest in knowledge, which we call the Revival of Learning, began powerfully to affect our land. Though, as we have seen, the Middle Ages had produced marvellous builders and cunning craftsmen who wrought beautifully in stone and wood and metal, there had been little advance in knowledge generally. Those men who gave their lives to learning had been content to follow in the old grooves, and few had sought to advance beyond their fathers in knowledge of the many marvels by which we are surrounded in this wonderful universe.

But the Revival of Learning, which began in Italy and spread thence to Western Europe, was marked by a keen love of learning, and an eager spirit of inquiry and mental curiosity. These new interests prompted men, on every hand, to search into those things which their fathers had accepted without question, and to endeavour to carry their explorations farther and farther into the boundless sea of knowledge. The art of printing, which Caxton had brought to England while the feudal barons were wrecking the power of their order in the slaughters of the Wars of the Roses, was a powerful aid to the New Learning. In Tudor times learning was no longer the special property of the clergy; sovereigns and great ladies like Elizabeth and Lady Jane Grey, courtiers and soldiers like Sir Walter Raleigh and Sir Philip Sidney, spent much time in varied learning and in reading. So great were the changes which manifested themselves in early Tudor times that we generally regard them as marking the beginning of modern history in our land.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE QUARREL WITH ROME

One result of the new spirit of inquiry, which we call the Revival of Learning, was the questioning of the authority of the Pope and of some of the doctrines which for a long time had received the support of the Church of Rome. This movement was especially strong among the peoples akin to the English in race, whom we call the Teutonic or Germanic peoples.

In England, as we have seen, the desire for Reformation in the Church was no new thing. From the time of Wycliffe and his wandering priests, discontent with the Church and its doctrines had been present in many minds. Probably, nowhere in England had this feeling of discontent been more common than in Essex, the county which had been so deeply affected by the teachings of John Ball. Certainly, during the times of the Lancastrian kings, a number of Essex people, such as William Chivelyng of Colchester, and a vicar named John Bagley, were burnt for heresy. Probably many a one suffered in those days of whose name no record was kept. Occasionally we find in old accounts merely the bald statement of a certain sum of money spent upon wood for the burning of some unnamed heretic.

We generally date the Reformation in England from the reign of Henry VIII. That king, however, had little desire to reform the doctrines of the Church of Rome. He quarrelled with the Pope because he wished to divorce his wife Katherine in order to marry Anne Boleyn, and he therefore had himself declared Supreme Head of the Church of England. It was at Waltham in Essex that the king was advised by a scholar named Cranmer to submit the question of a divorce to the universities of

Europe. Later, the case was tried before Cranmer, whom the king had made Archbishop of Canterbury, and of course the decision was given in the king's favour.

Anne Boleyn was closely connected with Essex. Her father owned the house of New Hall, Boreham, in the county, which was afterwards much enlarged or rebuilt by Henry VIII, and became one of his favourite palaces.

New Hall

Tradition also connects the brick tower in Green Street, East Ham, with the unfortunate queen's name, and indeed, it is generally known as Boleyn Castle. From the windows of the tower, which was formerly at least two stories higher than at present, the shipping on the Thames and the royal palace at Greenwich must have been plainly visible. At that time the branch of the Thames called Ham Creek came close up to the house, so that the royal barge could carry the king from his

palace of Greenwich almost to the gates of Anne's Tower.

Poor Anne Boleyn's day of splendour and of power was a brief one. Only a few short years after she had passed through London in splendid procession as the king's bride, her head fell upon Tower Hill. The firing of a gun gave the signal to Henry VIII that the tragedy of her love and life was complete, as he stood ready for the hunt in his Forest of Essex.

"The business is done; now to the sport," were his callous words on hearing the death-signal of one for whose sake he had broken with the Church of Rome.

Whether Henry wished it or not, the breach with Rome, once made, rapidly widened. The wealth of the monasteries and other religious houses invited attack, and the king and many of his servants hoped to profit by their ruin. Moreover, their inmates were accused of breaking the rules of their orders and, in some cases, of leading evil lives. The monasteries, therefore, were dissolved and their riches seized by the king or by his favourites.

In Essex, nearly fifty religious houses were suppressed, and their revenues of some £7,500—representing at that time much more wealth than at present—were seized. One Essex abbot, John Beche, of St. John's Abbey, Colchester, had the courage to speak out against the king's action in despoiling the Church. His courage cost him his life; he was arrested and hanged on the charge of treason, close to the walls of his own abbey.

No doubt many of the people of Essex suffered much from the dissolution of the monasteries. Whatever faults may have grown up among the monks, they were generally kind and generous landlords, and, moreover, they were the great almsgivers of the Middle Ages. Therefore, apart from the fact that the majority of English people were still Roman Catholics, many of the poorer folk

sadly missed the help in food and shelter which the monks had given them in times of trouble. Hence the north of England flamed out in insurrection. In Essex, however, though there was some rioting, the disturbance was not serious. Probably this was due partly to the prosperity of the county, and partly to the fact that the reformed doctrines had already made a good deal of

Felstead School (From an old print)

progress in Essex, where the people were more advanced in opinion than those more remote from the Continent.

One of the chief agents in this spoliation of the monasteries was Thomas Cromwell, who took the title of Earl of Essex, but perished upon the scaffold after a brief spell of power. The riches of the monasteries laid the foundation of the fortunes of many new families, who began to take the places of the old feudal nobles. Thus in

Essex much wealth passed into the hands of Sir Thomas Audley, whose name is commemorated in the famous mansion of Audley End, and into the hands of Lord Rich and others.

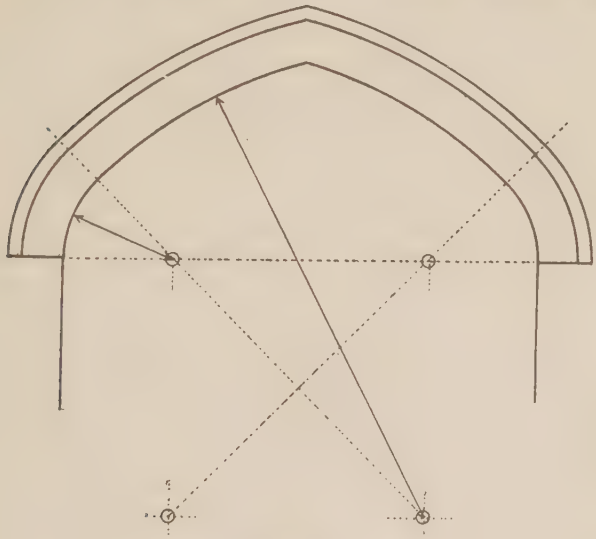
This Lord Rich, Chancellor to Henry VIII, was the founder of Felstead School, the most important public school in Essex now in existence. The foundation of colleges and schools was one of the natural results of the Revival of Learning, and, directly or indirectly, the money for the schools was often derived from the plunder of the religious houses. The monastery fell, the school rose in its place ; knowledge was no longer to be confined to the monks or to any one order, but to be spread abroad over the land. Many of the old Essex schools were founded, or had new charters granted to them in Tudor times. Among them were the grammar schools of Colchester, Saffron Walden, Maldon, the Monoux School at Walthamstow, Brentwood, Newport, and Dedham. Somewhat later, in 1629, the Grammar School at Chigwell was founded by Archbishop Harsnett, a native of Colchester, who rose to be Archbishop of York. Evidently, the good archbishop shared King James I's dislike to tobacco, for he laid it down that the school-master should be "no Tipler nor Haunter of ale houses, no Puffer of Tobacco".

CHAPTER XXXIII

PERPENDICULAR CHURCHES

The period including the whole of the fifteenth and the first half of the sixteenth century, that is, roughly, down to the time of Henry VIII's quarrel with the Church of Rome, marks the closing stage of the old

Gothic, or Pointed, style of architecture in England. We have seen how the separate windows of the early periods of Gothic came, first, to be grouped in twos or threes, and later, how the grouped windows gave place to one large window divided into parts by vertical stone bars or



FOUR-CENTRED ARCH

mullions, which, however, did not reach right up to the top of the window.

In the period of which we are now speaking, these mullions were carried up as *perpendicular* lines to the top of the window, and on this account the style is known as the Perpendicular. Moreover, this word expresses the general effect of the style; for the buttresses, piers, and other parts are drawn up to a great height in proportion to their thickness, and thus make the vertical or perpendicular effect the most striking.

You will remember that the Pointed style is so called because of the pointed arch which took the place of the round Norman arch. In the Perpendicular style the arch often became flattened or depressed. This arch is called the four-centred arch, because it is described by the use of compasses from four centres, as you will see from the diagram. The four-centred arch is very characteristic of Perpendicular doorways, and is often enclosed in a rectangular frame. The spaces between the arch and the square frame are called spandrils, and are filled in with carving, frequently coats of arms or badges.

The windows of the Perpendicular style are often of very great size, sometimes, indeed, occupying nearly the whole of a wall. Hence, many buttresses had to be built to bear the weight of the building, and the window itself had to be strengthened by crossbars, called transoms, running at right angles to the mullions. Thus the window is made up of a number of oblongs or rectangles, and the same effect is often carried out in the walls by dividing the whole surface into oblong panels.

It is, to say the least, doubtful whether the Perpendicular style is as beautiful or as perfect in taste as the Decorated Gothic. In Essex, however, the finest Gothic churches are Perpendicular, and the two which are generally considered the finest of all are the beautiful churches of Saffron Walden and Thaxted.

Saffron Walden has a very fine church, with splendid nave and aisles and window-tracery of great beauty. Thaxted Church is not only very beautiful in itself, but there are several features of special interest about it. One of these is the graceful stone spire, which is remarkable as being the only stone spire in the county dating from the Middle Ages. The windows of the chancel-aisle retain some of the old stained glass which originally filled them. These fragments of old glass serve to remind us that,

Saffron Walden Church

beautiful as our old churches are still, the glory of colour with which they were formerly filled has departed; the window glass, rich in varied tints, and matchless to-day in beauty of treatment; the gold and precious stones of the shrines; the wall-paintings and the decorations of altar and wall-tombs. Nearly all these beautiful orna-

Thaxted Church

ments were destroyed, either at the Reformation or, later, by the Puritans. In their zeal to uproot everything which they thought savoured of the Church of Rome, the Reformers destroyed many things of priceless beauty. The numerous crucifixes, which were to be found in the old churches, were especially singled out for destruction, and it is very rarely that we find them remaining. It is interesting, therefore, to find the original crucifixes on the gables of the east end and north porch of Thaxted

St. Mary's Church, Chelmsford

Church. This north porch has a splendid front, and in the panels above the doorway are the royal arms of Edward IV.

The church at Chelmsford dates from the fifteenth century, and was dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Unfortu-

Tower of South Weald Church

nately the whole of the nave and part of the chancel fell in over a hundred years ago, so that a great part of the present church is modern. The fine Perpendicular tower, ornamented with the badges of the great Essex families, the De Veres and the Bourchiers, remains still; and

the church is not unworthy of being the cathedral church of the new bishopric of Chelmsford.

There is so much Perpendicular work in the churches of the county that we can only mention some of the most

Tower of Ingatestone Church

noteworthy. If, however, the chief characteristics of the style are remembered, there will be little difficulty in recognizing it, and the old churches of the county will be found to have a new interest.

There are fine massive towers at Newport and at Bocking. Brightlingsea Church stands on high ground,

and its beautiful tower can be seen for miles around. This church has also a splendid west window. Clavering has a large church with very beautiful windows. Fine Perpendicular doorways exist at Brightlingsea, Bocking, and Newport, and other notable churches of the period are at Great Bardfield, Coggeshall, and Dedham.

During this period brick came to be frequently employed. The curious tower of Fryerning Church, the massive tower of Ingatestone Church, and the fine porches of Feering and Pebmarsh Churches are built of this material.

There is a large number of brasses of this period in Essex churches. The most interesting is one in Little Easton Church of Henry Bourchier, Earl of Essex, who died two years before the Battle of Bosworth Field, and his countess. The figures of the earl and countess are perfect, though a large number of small brasses of Yorkist and Bourchier badges are lost. The brass lies on the top of a large altar-tomb, surmounted by a canopy of Purbeck marble. The earl was a Knight of the Garter, and is represented wearing the mantle of the order over his armour. Other brasses of the period are to be found in many of our churches: Wyvenhoe, Latton, Writtle, and North Ockendon, for example.

Layer Marney Church contains a fine altar-tomb with an elaborate effigy of Sir William de Marney, who died early in the fifteenth century.

The Perpendicular style marks the close of the Old Gothic architecture in England. Builders began more and more, under the influence of the study of Latin and Greek, to imitate the "classic" styles of Rome and Greece. Indeed, men came to the pass of foolishly despising the beautiful native work of the Middle Ages. They decried the buildings of the Pointed style as being "barbarous", like the uncivilized Goths that pillaged

Rome, and it was at this time that the word "Gothic", given in contempt, was first used to describe the style. At the same time the beautiful crafts of the Middle Ages, the carving in stone and in wood, the decoration of

Layer Marney Tomb

windows in stained glass, and the making of monumental brasses, fell into decay, and the workers lost that sense of beauty and taste in decoration which marks much of the work of the early craftsmen.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE DARK DAYS OF QUEEN MARY

The struggle between the Old Religion and the New, between the Church of Rome and the Reformers, was by no means closed by the changes made in the reign of Henry VIII. Many still clung with fervent belief and love to the doctrines and the beautiful services of the ancient Church; others as passionately desired what they conceived to be a purer and a nobler worship of the Living God. Unfortunately, as has happened in many ages and in many lands, hatred and all uncharitableness grew up in the minds and embittered the hearts of those who, in slightly differing ways, professed the service of the Prince of Peace. Many a foul and cruel deed done in the name of religion stains the history of our land.

We must, however, in justice to our forefathers, remember that the idea of religious toleration, the respect for the opinions of others who do not see quite the same side of truth as we do, is of comparatively modern growth. We realize now that we cannot change men's inward beliefs, however much we may, through terror, change their outward conduct, by burning at the stake or disembowelling at the foot of the gibbet.

In no part of England had the doctrines of the Reformation made more progress than in Essex. Hence, when the Catholic reaction set in and Queen Mary came to the throne, no part of England suffered more terribly than Essex from the Marian persecution. Of the three hundred or more Protestants who were burnt at the stake during her reign, over seventy suffered in Essex, and the county was dotted with the death-fires of those who preferred death in its most painful form to renouncing what they

believed to be the truth. Martyrs died at Coggeshall, at Braintree, at Maldon, at Colchester, at Horndon-on-the-Hill, at Rayleigh, at Brentwood, at Manningtree, at Rochford, at Ardleigh, at Saffron Walden, and at Stratford.

In a number of Essex towns you will see memorials of these martyrs. In Colchester there is a monument to the memory of over twenty people of the town who suffered for their faith in the town itself. Other townsmen of Colchester were among those who died at the stake at Smithfield, in London. Tens of thousands of Essex people must weekly, nay daily, pass the Martyrs' Memorial in front of St. John's Church, Stratford. On that spot, one summer day in June, thirteen poor souls, faithful to the light that was in them, died by fire, and there, on another day, two poor men of Barking, one a cripple, the other blind, died likewise. "Be of good cheer," said the cripple to his companion, casting away his crutch, "for my Lord of London will heal us both shortly."

"My Lord of London," of whom the poor cripple spoke, was Bonner, Bishop of London, who was very active in the persecution, and who, for some time during the reign of Mary, lived in the county at Copford Hall.

The story of the Marian Martyrs is set forth in the famous *Book of Martyrs*, written at Waltham Abbey by John Foxe—a book which, we must remember, however, was the work of a bitter partisan. Perhaps the most pathetic of all the stories of the Essex martyrs is that of William Hunter of Brentwood. He was little more than a lad, a young man of nineteen years. He had been apprenticed to a citizen of London, but had been sent home to Brentwood by his master, who feared that his religious opinions would get him into trouble. But Hunter could not hide the faith that was in him. Time and again he was put in the stocks, and was brought before Bonner,

who offered him his life if he would but recant. But to him falsehood to his belief was worse than death. "Lord receive my spirit," he said, as the smoke and flames closed round him; and thus he died.

To-day these martyrs' memorials at Stratford, at Colchester, and Brentwood, are but as reminders of old, unhappy, far-off days of mistaken cruelty in the name of God. But the heroic constancy of the Protestant martyrs, like the heroic constancy of the Catholics, the wise and good Sir Thomas More and others who suffered for their faith, speak to us to-day of the beauty of devotion to truth and of heroic self-sacrifice. The lesson is the same as the one taught by the barons of Essex who dared the wrath of King John, and of the peasants of Essex who struck the first great blow for the freedom of the common people.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE "SPACIOUS DAYS" OF QUEEN ELIZABETH

It is a relief to turn from the dark days of Mary, from the time of persecution at home and weakness abroad, to the "spacious days" of Queen Elizabeth. True, the spirit of persecution was not yet dead; Catholic priests died at Tyburn for the faith and policy of their Church, but the nation as a whole rallied round the person of the sovereign, and Catholics as well as Protestants were ready in defence of her throne when it was threatened by the power of Spain.

In the great days of Queen Elizabeth the full effects of the Revival of Learning were felt in our land. England arose to a full sense of her strength and for the first time claimed and won the mastery of the seas. In every field of thought and action the island produced great and

illustrious men; statesmen, warriors, sailors, poets, and philosophers.

We are fortunately able to judge of the condition of Essex, and indeed, of other parts of our land, during the reign of Elizabeth from the writings of several men who were living in her time. Inspired by the spirit of patriotism and of loving pride in their country, which marked the age, they found a fit subject for their pens in the description of their native land. Thus the learned Camden wrote a survey of the island in his *Britannia*, and the poet Drayton wrote a description in verse of "all the tracts, rivers, mountains, forests, and other parts of Great Britain".

From these and other writers of the time, it is evident that, in wealth and productiveness, Essex took high rank among the counties of England. Camden called it "a very fruitful extensive tract, well wooded and wealthy". Norden, who lived about the same time, wrote: "This shire is most fatt, fruitfull, and full of profitable thinges," and further went on to say: "This shire seemeth to me to deserve the title of the Englishe Goshen, the fattest of the lande: comparable to Palestina that flowed with milke and hunneye." From this writer we learn that the county was especially famous for its wool, for saffron, from which the town of Saffron Walden gets its name, for hops, and for the huge cheeses which were produced upon the marshes. There was, however, another side to the picture, for the writer dwells upon the unhealthiness of the marshes, "which," he says, "gave me a moste cruell quarterne fever."

Drayton, too, praises the county highly:—

"For Essex is our dower, which greatly doth abound
With every simple good that in the Isle is found."

Somewhat later, the wise and witty Thomas Fuller

added his praise, "a fair county . . . plentifully affording all things necessary for man's subsistence." Fuller spoke with knowledge derived from residence in Essex, for, during the troubled time of the Civil War and the Commonwealth, he occupied the curacy of Waltham Abbey.

While the county was thus a flourishing and fruitful agricultural region, it also increased in importance as a manufacturing district. You will remember that, from the time of Edward III, the manufacture of woollen goods had been established in a number of Essex towns and villages. The importance of this manufacture was, however, greatly increased by the cruel and foolish policy of King Philip of Spain.

Besides his vast possessions in Spain, Italy, and the Americas, Philip ruled over the Low Countries or Netherlands, which we now know as Holland and Belgium. The splendid towns of the Netherlands had from the time of the Middle Ages been the great hives of manufacturing industry, especially famous for the fine woollens which hey produced. But, because Protestantism had made much progress in the land, Philip let loose upon it the terrors of a savage and ruthless persecution.

One result was the rise of the heroic little Dutch Republic, which waged a long and apparently unequal but, in the end, triumphant struggle with the power of Spain. Many Englishmen aided the Dutch in their fight, indeed, the queen at length sent an expedition under the Earl of Leicester, which, however, accomplished little. But an Essex man, Sir Francis de Vere, did valiant service against Spain, and won a great reputation as one of the most intrepid and successful captains of his time. He served in many battles and sieges, and his last exploit was the defence of Ostend during a long siege, with a garrison of a few hundred men against an army of twelve

thousand. With him, in most of his actions, served his brother, Horace de Vere, afterwards Lord Tilbury.

Another result of Philip's policy in the Netherlands was to drive out many of the skilful and industrious burghers and artisans of Flanders and Holland. A number of these settled in Essex, and their presence gave a great impetus to the woollen manufacture. Colchester became famous for the production of "bays and says" (baize and serge), and the wealth and importance of the town was greatly increased. So high was the reputation of the foreign workers for the honesty and quality of their goods, that the seals with which they marked their goods were long held to be a sufficient guarantee. From the time of Elizabeth down to comparatively recent times, weaving and its allied trades flourished not only at Colchester, but also at Halstead, Braintree, Coggeshall, Dedham, Bocking, and other towns and villages in Essex.

Religious persecution in France also added another foreign element to the population of the county, and from 1572 onwards a number of French Protestants or Huguenots settled at Maldon, Thorpe-le-Soken, and other places in Essex.

CHAPTER XXXVI

QUEEN ELIZABETH IN ESSEX: THE GREAT ARMADA

Queen Elizabeth was closely connected with Essex. New Hall, the reader will remember, was a residence, not only of her father, Henry VIII, but, before he obtained possession of it, of Elizabeth's mother, the hapless Queen Anne Boleyn. The arms of Queen Elizabeth are represented over the porch of the mansion. Havering Palace was also a frequent place of residence for the queen, as indeed it was, on account of the hunting in the Forest, for English sovereigns down to the time of Charles I. No doubt many of those who read this book sometimes spend a day in the Forest at Chingford. There, near the Royal Forest Hotel, still stands the old building known as Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge. It is a brick building with a frame of oak-beams and a great oaken staircase. In the *Essex Naturalist*, a writer, who was employed to superintend the restoration of the buildings, tells us that he is certain that the first and second floors were originally open, and that the building was a kind of Grand Stand and not a dwelling-house. This opinion is supported by the fact that in a survey of two of the queen's houses in the Forest, one is spoken of as the "Great Standinge".

Like her father Henry VIII, Elizabeth had the gift of making herself popular with her people. She also loved display, and she gratified herself and pleased the populace by stately journeys or "progresses" through the country, stopping at the houses of great lords and gentlemen, where she was welcomed with musical plays and shows of all kinds. No doubt some of you have read, in Sir Walter Scott's novel *Kenilworth*, of the great display with which the queen's favourite, the Earl of Leicester,

welcomed his mistress at his castle in Warwickshire. This great earl had a house at Wanstead, in Essex, and there he was visited by the queen. She travelled from London in a stately procession, accompanied by her lords and gentlemen, through streets filled with cheering people, and brightened by the gay hangings of silk and tapestry and all manner of bright-coloured stuff, which were hung from the windows of the houses in her honour. At Wanstead House she stayed for some time, and was entertained by shows and plays.

On at least four occasions the queen travelled, in this way, through Essex, visiting not only the houses of the great, but also the chief towns. Colchester, Saffron Walden, and Harwich, among other places, were thus honoured, and the people gratified by seeing their sovereign amongst them. At Colchester, we are told, the aldermen received the queen, "riding upon comely geldings . . . with scarlet sleeves in their scarlet gowns, with caps and black velvet tippets."

But the most famous incident in Elizabeth's association with Essex is her visit to the Camp of Tilbury in the time of England's deadly peril of invasion by the army of Spain. As we have said, England had aided the revolted subjects of Philip of Spain in the Netherlands, and had sheltered those of them who fled from his oppression. Moreover, the bold English sailors, who laid the foundation of our country's greatness as a sea-power, had harried his towns in America and plundered his galleons upon the high seas. Therefore, Philip sent forth his Great Armada to humble the pride of Elizabeth and to conquer the island-kingdom.

England sprang to arms at the menace of invasion. If the invaders landed, London would undoubtedly be their chief object of attack. Therefore, the main camp of the army of defence was formed at Tilbury, which for long

years had been one of the chief centres for the defence of the great waterway to London. Moreover, if you turn to the map, you will see that the position was a central one, whence the defending army could march to meet an invader landing at any point along a long line of coast. Therefore, while troops lay at Stratford, East Ham, and other convenient places

Tilbury Fort (in 1831)

outside London, the main army encamped under the Earl of Leicester at Tilbury. The old writer, Stow, who no doubt saw the men upon the march, says: "It was a pleasant sight to behold the soldiers as they marched towards Tilbury, their cheerful countenances, courageous words and gestures, dancing and leaping wheresoever they came, and in the camp their next felicity was hope of fight with the enemy."

You have, no doubt, read in Lord Macaulay's poem of

The Armada, how the warning beacons flashed the news of the coming of the Spanish fleet through the length and breadth of the land. The Half-hundred of Becontree or Beacontree, which is now the most populous part of Essex, and includes the great boroughs and towns of West Ham, East Ham, Walthamstow, Leyton, Ilford, and Barking, gets its name from the beacon which used to stand on Windmill Hill at Woodford. The beacons that flared into the night from that and from many another hill throughout the land, summoned not only noble and knight, squire and yeoman to take their places in the army of defence, but bore also their summons to the hardy seamen who were to enforce the great truth that the true defence of our land is upon the sea. From all the ports of the south and south-east coasts, vessels set out to hang on the flanks of the Spanish fleet as its ships crawled slowly up the Channel, and to help Howard and Drake and the great sea-captains to " pluck their feathers one by one ". In that glorious fleet sailed ships of Colchester and Harwich and other Essex ports. Roger Townshend, of Wyvenhoe, was knighted at sea for his bravery in the fight.

While the issue still hung in the balance, while indeed there were rumours that the Spaniards had effected a landing on the south coast, Queen Elizabeth visited her army in the camp at Tilbury. There, it is said, she spoke brave words of encouragement to her soldiers, saying, " I know that I have but the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart of a king." And again, " Therefore am I come amongst you at this time, not for any recreation or sport, but being resolved in the midst and heat of the battle to live or die amongst you all, to lay down for my God and my kingdom, and for my people, my honour and my blood." One would like to believe that these were the very words that the queen used to

her soldiers, and we may at least feel sure that they represent very well the stout-hearted spirit in which queen and country faced the deadly peril.

But there was no need to put the courage of the men in the camp at Tilbury to the test. The fire-ships off Calais and the attacks of the English ships drove the Spaniards in confusion round the North of Scotland. There, terrible storms completed the ruin of the "Invincible Armada", whose battered hulls strewed the coasts of Scotland and Ireland with their wreckage.

CHAPTER XXXVII

TUDOR DWELLINGS

During the Tudor period, great people for the first time in the history of our country began to build their houses with a view rather to comfort than to strengt. . The chief object of the baron of the Middle Ages was a strong fortress which would secure him against his enemies. But under the Tudors, times had changed. The barons were no longer allowed to keep great armies of retainers to man their fortified castles. Moreover, the power of the kings and their possession of cannon rendered the defences of the castles comparatively powerless to resist a regular siege. The Revival of Learning, too, gave an added interest to indoor life, and a greater feeling for the beauty and comfort of the home. The increase of trade and commerce, and the spoils of the monasteries, also began to create a class of "new" men, as they were called. Many of them bought large estates and built themselves houses in the taste of their times. This taste was largely influenced by the admiration of the arts of

Layer Marney Gateway

Greece and Rome which followed the Revival of Learning, and the buildings of the time of Elizabeth and the early Stuarts mark the decay of the Gothic style. Ornaments copied from the buildings of Greece and Rome now began to be added to the native style. The buildings of the time of Elizabeth are, however, very fine, with turrets and decorated chimney-stacks and great bay-windows;

Gateway of St. Osyth's Priory

while, inside, the rooms are often of great size, with beautifully decorated plaster ceilings and splendid fire-places and panelled walls.

A number of Essex dwelling-houses of Tudor date are earlier than the time of Elizabeth. Thus St. Osyth's Priory and Leighs Priory contain portions of the old religious houses which were allowed to stand after the dissolution of the monasteries. St. Osyth's, near the modern town of Clacton, was founded in very early days, and gets its name from the wife of one of the old East Saxon kings who was martyred by the heathen Danes.

The noble Perpendicular gateway of the old building forms part of the present house, and was built not long before the dissolution of the monasteries.

During the Tudor period, brick first came into common use for the building of great houses. One of the earliest and finest of these great brick buildings was Layer Marney Hall, in the village from which it is named. Layer

Leighs Priory

Marney was long in the hands of the Marney family, and the stately gateway of their home still stands to show its former magnificence. Above the actual gateway are two stories, each with large mullioned windows. Flanking this central portion are great octagonal towers, each eight stories in height.

Of New Hall, the home of the Boleyns, which was enlarged by Henry VIII and Elizabeth, a considerable portion still remains. After it had ceased to be a royal

Audley End

residence it was, for a time, in the possession of Oliver Cromwell, and after the Restoration, of General Monk, who had been created Duke of Albemarle for his services in helping Charles II to regain the throne. For a good many years it has been used as a nunnery.

But the great glory of Essex, in the way of Elizabethan architecture, is the stately and vast house known as Audley End, which stands near Saffron Walden. The house gets its name from Thomas Audley, Chancellor during the reign of Henry VIII. Like many another at that time, Thomas Audley grew rich upon the spoils of the Church, receiving as a part of his share of the plunder the estates of the Abbey of Walden. These estates passed, in due time, to his grandson, Lord Thomas Howard, one of the great sailors who won fame in England's struggle against Spain. Lord Thomas Howard was rewarded for his services by being made Lord Howard de Walden, and later, Earl of Suffolk. In 1603, the year of Queen Elizabeth's death, the earl began the building of the grandest house in England. The great mansion took thirteen years in building, and cost nearly £200,000, a huge sum for those days. At first, the house consisted of various ranges of buildings, surrounding two great square courtyards. So large and so grand was it that its magnificence astonished King James I when he visited it. He told the Earl of Suffolk, who at the time held the great office of Lord Treasurer, that it was "too large for a king, though possibly not for a Lord Treasurer".

It proved, however, too large for many of its occupants to keep up. Charles II lived in it for some time, and afterwards it passed through various hands. At different times many parts of the building were taken down, including the great gallery, two hundred and twenty-six feet long. The part that remains forms, however, a

splendid mansion, and enables us to get some idea of the palace of which it once formed part.

There are many other Elizabethan houses in Essex. Among these are Weald Hall, built by Sir Anthony Browne, a Chief Justice under Elizabeth, who founded Brentwood Grammar School; Belhus in the parish of Aveley; Hill Hall, between Epping and Ongar; Copt Hall, near Epping; Gosfield Hall in North

Spains Hall, Finchingfield

Essex; and Spains Hall, Finchingfield. Some of these, however, like Weald Hall and Hill Hall, have been spoilt, if not ruined, so far as outward appearance goes, by owners who, in the eighteenth century, thought they were "improving" their beautiful houses by taking down the Elizabethan fronts and erecting in their places rows of columns and porches quite out of keeping with the building. Spains Hall, however, is a very beautiful example of an almost unaltered Elizabethan dwelling-house.

Apart from the homes of rich and titled folk, there is a very great number of brick and timber farmhouses dating from Elizabethan and earlier times. A remarkable number of these, or their sites—hundreds in fact—are surrounded by moats, intended probably to protect them

The Moat, Ongar

from the gangs of robbers who for centuries infested the wilder parts of the country, such as the Forest and the unenclosed lands like Tiptree Heath. The district known as "The Rodings" or "The Roothings", through which the upper waters of the river Roding flow, is especially full of these ancient houses. Though at no great distance from London, the Roothings are still very secluded and remote, because they lie at a distance from the lines of the railway.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

KING AND PEOPLE

The struggle with Spain and the popularity of the queen had kept England, in the main, united during the reign of Elizabeth. But when James I came to the throne, the clouds which were to burst in the Great Rebellion began to gather. Bitter hatred between Catholics and Protestants continued, and the Protestants were further divided into the followers of the Church of England and the more extreme Puritans.

Essex is to some extent connected with the Gunpowder Plot, by which a knot of Catholic fanatics designed to blow up king and Parliament. It was through a letter which they wrote to the Catholic Lord Monteagle, who lived at Great Hallingbury Hall in Essex, that the plot was discovered. Tradition says, but wrongly, that Lord Monteagle lived at Eastbury House, near Barking, and further, that the plotters held some of their meetings there. Eastbury, however, is an interesting house, and a piscina in one of the rooms, formerly used as a chapel, shows that it belonged to a Roman Catholic family. The traveller from London to Southend sees the house upon the right-hand side of the train soon after leaving Barking.

Essex, like all the Eastern Counties, was largely Puritan during Stuart times. Now the Puritans had to suffer a great deal in fines and imprisonment and other ways, because they would not join in the services of the Church. Therefore, many of them left England and went to join their Puritan friends, who, in 1620, had crossed the Atlantic in the *Mayflower*, and founded the first of the Puritan colonies in North America. These emigrants did

not forget their native land. They called the region in which they settled New England, and they named most of the towns and villages which they founded after their native places in the old country. Thirty-two of the early towns of New England bear the names of Essex towns and villages, and we may, therefore, be sure that there were many Essex folk among the colonists. Moreover, just before the Civil War, we find that the names

Eastbury House

of a third of the freemen in the colony of Massachusetts Bay are those of known Essex families.

Charles I failed entirely to agree with his first three Parliaments, and for some years he ruled without Parliaments at all. During the greater part of this time, his Lord Treasurer was an Essex man, Richard Weston, whom the king created Earl of Portland. After the death of Weston, the unpopular tax of Ship Money greatly angered the people, quarrels with the Scots about religion forced the king again to summon Parliament, and the attempted arrest of the Five Members led to the outbreak of civil war.

During this troublous time many of the Essex Puritans suffered. Some of them fled overseas to the colonies, some were fined and imprisoned; one of them, John Bastwick, a physician of Colchester, was fined £1,000, was imprisoned and put in the pillory, and had his ears cut off by the public executioner.

When, in 1642, war broke out, almost the whole of Essex sided with the Parliament against the king. Nearly all the farmers, the traders and weavers of the towns, and a great many of the gentry of the county took that side. Even some of the clergy shared the martial spirit. The Vicar of Leyton, for example, preached in his parish church clad in a soldier's buff coat and girt with a trooper's sword. Some Royalists there were, but, being closely watched by their neighbours, they could do little to aid the king. Sir John Lucas of Colchester, for instance, when the king had set up his standard at Nottingham, designed to join him with such followers as he could raise. Secretly, after nightfall, his band was assembled in his house and the gates opened. But no sooner had they ridden out into the blackness of the night than they found themselves beset by an ambush of the friends of the Parliament, who had concealed themselves outside. Drums were beaten, the alarm bells rung, and from all quarters armed townsfolk ran to beset the Royalists. Sir John himself was taken prisoner, and only released on giving bail for a great sum of money.

Together with the other Eastern Counties and the counties of the East Midlands, Essex formed the group of the "Associated Counties" which, with London, formed the great bulwark of the cause of the Parliament. One of the leaders writes: "The power of Essex is great, a place of most life and religion in the land." The fact that Essex formed part of a district almost entirely in favour of the Parliament, preserved it from the marchings

and battles of the first part of the Civil War. So long as London remained in the hands of the Parliament, the king, whose chief strength lay in the north and west of England, could do little against the solid block of Associated Counties lying east and north-east of London. Therefore, though Essex men played their part in the conflict, the fields and streets of the county were not stained by the blood of civil war till after the army of Cromwell's "New Model" had won the Battle of Naseby, and the king was a prisoner.

Cromwell, "our chief of men", as the poet Milton called him, reviled as a monster through many generations, exalted by some as the greatest of heroes, but from any point of view certainly one of the strongest and greatest men that our island has produced, was connected by many close ties with our county. He himself had been the life and soul of the Associated Counties; his wife was an Essex woman, being the daughter of Sir Thomas Bourchier, and his boys went to the Essex school of Felstead. He himself, in the days of his power, lived for some time at New Hall.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE "LOYAL SACRIFICE": SIEGE OF COLCHESTER

In 1648, the hopes of the Royalists revived. In spite of the defeat at Naseby and the captivity of the king, the loyal and hopeful spirits of the cavaliers prepared in many parts of the country for one more desperate effort on behalf of the royal cause. No doubt the fact that the Parliament and the Army had quarrelled made them hopeful of success.

During 1647, Fairfax, with a part of the victorious army, lay near Chelmsford, while other detachments were

quartered in the north of the county. The heavy taxes and the free quarters exacted for the soldiers were a grievous burden. Moreover, a number of the more moderate people were afraid that the rebellion was likely to go to greater lengths than they wished. They feared lest the rule of the army might be harder to bear than that of the king.

Early in June a number of the Royalists gathered together at Chelmsford. Chief among them were the Lords Norwich, Capel, and Loughborough, and Sir Charles Lucas of Colchester. With their followers they advanced to Braintree, plundering the house of the Earl of Warwick at Leighs Priory on their way. A day or two afterwards they occupied Colchester, where they took up their quarters in the old abbey which belonged to the Lucas family. The Royalists were about 4,000 in number, and many of them were but poorly armed ; they were but ill supplied with powder and warlike stores, and the provisions in the town were scanty. Moreover, the ancient walls were badly broken down. In five hundred places there were great gaps in them, says a Royalist who went through the siege.

Hard upon the heels of the Royalists came Fairfax—old " gouty-legs " as they called him in derision. But in spite of his gout the general acted promptly. Crossing from Kent, where he had been engaged in crushing another Royalist rising, he landed at Tilbury, and advanced by rapid marches through Billericay and Coggeshall, till he arrived before Colchester. He found that Sir Charles Lucas had drawn up his forces across the approach to the town by the London Road. Fairfax hoped to crush the rising at once by taking the place before the Royalists had time to repair their defences. Three times, however, his footmen were driven back, but the wonderful troopers of the New Model Army turned the Royalists'

right wing, and the defending army was driven in confusion towards the Head Gate.

There the three Cavaliers, Lord Capel, Sir Charles Lucas, and Sir George Lisle, performed a feat which the Royalist who tells the story compares, not unjustly, to the feat of Horatius at the Bridge. Dismounted and pike in hand, they held the gate while the press of fugitives rushed through, and then closed and barred it in the faces of the pursuers. Fairfax endeavoured in vain to fire the gate. He then made an attack upon the walls, which failed, although it was kept up until midnight.

Foiled in his attempt to take the town by a sudden attack, Fairfax sat down to a regular siege, while the defenders set to work to repair the breaches in the walls and to put the place in as good a state of defence as possible. Fairfax had with him a force of 5,000 men, most of whom were veterans of the Civil War. They were aided by the trained bands of Essex and Suffolk.

Within the town, the pangs of hunger soon began to make themselves felt. Horses were killed for food, and, at length, dogs and cats and even rats and mice were eaten by the starving townsfolk. Even such repulsive food was very dear ; the side of a small dog, we are told, selling for six shillings. The mayor begged Fairfax to let the women and children leave the stricken town. They were indeed sent out from one of the gates, but the besiegers drove them back.

Still the gallant defenders held out. They hoped that the Scots who had crossed the Border on behalf of the king would be able to burst through to their relief. Therefore they would not hear of surrender though Fairfax carried the gate-house of the abbey by storm, and his cannon laid waste a great part of the town, so that three hundred houses lay in ruins. But though battle and disease

thinned the ranks of the defenders their spirit was unbroken.

Their last hope, however, was destroyed when, in August, Cromwell crushed the Scots at Preston. The news was sent into the town by the besiegers and, with their food exhausted and only a barrel and a half of powder left in the town, the heroic defenders were forced to surrender.

Whatever view we may take of the rights and wrongs of the quarrel between King Charles and his Parliament, it is impossible not to admire the courage, the devotion, and the loyalty which led so many gallant gentlemen to sacrifice everything in his cause. Two of the brave leaders of the defenders of Colchester were soon to set a seal to their devotion with their blood. Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle were condemned to death by a Council of War.

At seven o'clock in the evening of a day in late summer, the gallant gentlemen were led forth from Colchester to complete their "loyall sacrifice" for the king. Sir Charles Lucas was the first to be shot. After the manner of the time, he was allowed to speak to the witnesses of his execution. Right truly he told them that he, who had looked death in the face full many a time, was not afraid to die. But his death, without trial according to the laws of his land, for acts done by right of his commission from his lawful king, he declared to be unjust. Then, kneeling down, he prayed and commended his soul to God, and, rising, opened his doublet and bade the rebels do their worst.

The musket-shots rang out, and as Lucas fell, Sir George Lisle caught the body of his dying comrade and kissed his lips. Then he took his place before the firing party and called to them to come nearer.

"I'll warrant, sir, we hit you," said one of the soldiers.

"I have been nearer you when you have missed me," answered the gallant cavalier.

So, with a smile on his lips, he too fell beneath the bullets of the Roundheads.

Thus died two gallant gentlemen, worthy representatives of many noble spirits who staked happiness and fortune, and even life itself, in defence of the hopeless cause of the unfortunate, and often unworthy, line of the Stuarts.

The peers who were amongst the captives were left to be dealt with by the Parliament. Lord Capel was sent first to Windsor and then to the Tower. Thence he escaped, but only to be recaptured and executed.

CHAPTER XL

THE LATER STUARTS

The Siege of Colchester is the last great outstanding event in the history of Essex. The gallant effort of the Cavaliers on behalf of Charles I had failed, and next year the king himself was brought to the block. Two Essex men, Sir Harry Mildmay and Sir William Masham, were among the judges who condemned Charles to death, and in the new order of things Havering Palace passed into the hands of another of the regicides, Richard Deane. By him, the old residence of a long line of kings was destroyed. Havering was henceforth no longer a habitation of monarchs.

During the rule of Cromwell, the Great Protector dwelt for a time at New Hall, which, however, he soon left, preferring to live at Hampton Court. In Cromwell's "crowning mercy"—the Battle of Worcester—which drove Prince Charles into exile, the Essex militia took part under Sir Thomas Honeywood.

But the rule of the Puritans was not to last. England turned with relief from the stern rule of the "saints" and welcomed back the line of the Stuarts in the person of the unworthy Charles II. The "Merry Monarch" bought, but quite forgot to pay for, the stately mansion of Audley End. Here, his gay and frivolous court at times held revel. We read of his wife, Queen Catherine of Braganza, and her ladies, going a-fairing at Saffron Walden dressed as country girls and buying "yellow stockings and long gloves stitched with blue". But, certainly, the great ladies, in spite of their homely dresses, did not look much like Essex maidens, nor did the Portuguese queen and her ladies use the true Essex speech. They were soon surrounded by a curious crowd of folk wondering who these strange visitors might be, and they were, no doubt, glad enough to get away from the mob and put an end to their frolic.

But the times of Charles II were by no means wholly times of merry-making and junketing. The country suffered, for the last time on a great scale, from one of the terrible plagues that, at short intervals during many hundreds of years, scourged our land. During long centuries, the dread of the return of the pestilence, that every now and then swept away its thousands, had been one of the ever-present terrors of life. Many of these visits of the plague have left but little record in our history. It was only when the people died in multitudes, as in the Black Death of 1349, that the horrors of the time and the changes it produced stamped themselves plainly upon our history.

As late as 1603–4, a great plague had passed over London, and, at this time, the merchants of London are said to have held their Exchange at the old "Spotted Dog" Inn, which still stands in Upton Lane, West Ham. A painting of the City Arms, dated 1603, is preserved

in the house. The Great Plague of 1665, though much less deadly than the awful Black Death, was, however, the most terrible of the pestilences in the modern history of our land.

The Great Plague laid its hand heavily upon London. All who could, save some noble souls who stood bravely

THE "SPOTTED DOG" INN, UPTON

at the post of duty in the smitten city, fled from the death-haunted town and sought refuge in villages or camped in the open fields. Many fled across the River Lea into Essex. Some of them were driven back by the country people, who feared that the townsfolk would bring infection amongst them. Others passed over into the

Forest, and there sought such shelter as they could find or make among the woodland trees, until the storms and cold of winter drove them back again into the town. But not all of the Londoners who had fled into Essex escaped the plague. The disease spread from London into the country districts of Essex and there raged terribly, particularly in the town of Colchester. Indeed, that town suffered, in proportion to its population, even more than London. In many other Essex towns and villages great numbers died. Barking, then an important fishing town, counted its dead in hundreds, and death took a heavy toll from the people of Romford, Brentwood, and all the Essex towns and villages near London. The parish registers of West Ham, then a small village, show that over one hundred and fifty of its inhabitants died of the disease.

The plague passed and men returned again to their work and play. Soon afterwards, a new enemy, less terrible than the plague, because it was a foe that could be met and fought by stout hearts and strong hands, threatened the county. The Dutch fleet sailed up the Thames and burnt Sheerness, and for the first and last time in our history the citizens of London heard the sound of an enemy's guns. There were fears of a landing, and rumours that the Dutch were about to seize Mersea Island. A line of colliers, with holes cut in their bows, so that they might readily be sunk, was drawn up across the mouth of Harwich Harbour in order to protect the port from the Dutch fleet that lay off the Gunfleet Sands. But the danger of invasion passed away, and the closing part of the seventeenth century, the great Revolution, and the reigns of William and Mary, are not marked by any events of special importance in the history of the county.

CHAPTER XLI

THE BEGINNING OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: STORM AND FLOOD

The eighteenth century opens with our country committed to that great war with France in which the wonderful soldier, Marlborough, was to humble the pride of Louis XIV and to beat, in a succession of battles and sieges, the French soldiers who, for long years, had held themselves well-nigh invincible.

In the doings of this war our county has no special part above others, but there was one Essex lad who served his country so manfully afloat and ashore, and whose short life was so crowded with incident, that some account of him will not be out of place in a book like this, intended mainly for young readers.

The outline of the story of his life may be read, written in rather pompous language, in an inscription in the church of Great Waltham. His name was Hugh Everard, and he was the son of Sir Hugh Everard of Langleys, near Chelmsford, a manor which the Everards had held for many generations. As a schoolboy, he went to the famous old school at Felstead. His schooldays, however, were short. Young Hugh was to be a sailor, and after the manner of the time—Nelson, you will remember, went to sea at twelve years of age—he left school at Felstead in the year 1700, before he reached his thirteenth year. Five days afterwards he joined his ship, which was one of those convoying King William III to Holland. On his very first voyage, he encountered a terrible storm, in which many perished in his sight. The next two years, the inscription tells us, were spent in "several voyages and hardships endured by land and sea". In 1702, he was one of a party who made a hostile landing in Spain. He

was the third to land, and, while the men were jumping from the boats and forming up in some sort of order on the shore, they were attacked by a party of Spanish horse. Young Hugh Everard met the commander in a hand-to-hand fight. The boy, not yet fifteen, was wounded in the side. Nevertheless, he struck down and killed the Spanish officer.

After this action, Everard appears to have continued to serve in the Mediterranean with the fleet under Sir Cloudesley Shovel—the brave seaman who rose "from powder-monkey to admiral". Towards the winter of 1703, the fleet returned from the Mediterranean. A portion of it, under the admiral, anchored off the Gunfleet Sands, while the other part, including the *Restoration*, the ship on board which young Everard was a lieutenant, anchored in the Downs.

November, in that year, was marked by the "Great Storm", probably the most violent tempest of which we have any record in our country. The storm began on a Wednesday and increased gradually in fury, till on Saturday, November 27, it reached a height such as no man living had known. "Horror and confusion seized upon all, no pen can describe it, no tongue can express it," says Defoe. Tens of thousands of trees were uprooted in the country, while in the towns, houses were unroofed, chimney-stacks blown down and windows and doors blown in. For months after, many of the houses stood as mere skeletons for lack of labour to repair the havoc wrought by the furious wind. Thus the terrible storm, which lasted a week, "o'er pale Britannia passed," as the great writer, Addison, expressed it. In such a tempest, the anchorage of the Downs gave but little shelter. Many of the ships dragged their anchors and went aground in the furious breakers on the deadly Goodwin Sands.

Fifteen hundred men of the fleet died in those raging

waters, lashed into fury by the howling winds. Among them was gallant young Hugh Everard.

> Thus fell the Age's wonder
> After he had established a reputation
> That shall never die,

says the inscription in Great Waltham Church. Though the prophecy of the epitaph is scarcely likely to be fulfilled, yet we may well give a passing thought to the memory of so gallant a lad who died in the service of his country.

The Great Storm, which cost Hugh Everard his life, also destroyed another son of Essex. Winstanley was a native of Littlebury, who, having made money as a mercer in London, retired to his native village. There he busied himself with all sorts of curious and generally useless inventions. He conceived, however, an idea, excellent in itself, of building a lighthouse upon the Eddystone Rocks. But he carried it out unwisely and built a fanciful structure of wood, with all sorts of decorations, somewhat resembling a Chinese pagoda in appearance. This was the first light which shone out to warn sailors of their approach to these dreaded rocks.

Winstanley's intentions were admirable, but his lighthouse was altogether too flimsy to stand against the howling wind and lashing waves of the Great Storm. The first Eddystone Lighthouse was swallowed up in the waters, and its builder perished with it.

A few years afterwards another great storm did much damage to the marshlands of Essex. As we have said, the low-lying lands along the bank of the Thames and on some parts of the coast had, from very early times, been protected by dykes in order to reclaim from the river the marshlands and saltings whose rich herbage provided splendid pasturage for cattle. Every now and then,

however, men's defences gave way before some attack of Nature, and we read of floods such as the one which drove the monks of Stratford Langthorne from their abbey in the fourteenth century.

Nevertheless, on the whole, men maintained the struggle against the waters successfully, and held the land which they had won from the sea. Indeed, in the closing years of the reign of James I, the area of Essex had been increased by the winning of Canvey Island, which may be seen from Southend or Leigh, from the waters. It was reclaimed, from the mudflats of the Thames, by a Dutch engineer.

In the winter of 1707, the combined force of a strong wind and a very high tide broke through the river-wall near Dagenham, just as a similar combination of wind and water broke through the sea-wall at Canvey in recent times. Neglected at first, the gap grew to a great breach, a hundred yards wide and in places twenty feet deep. Through this great gap a vast volume of water rushed backwards and forwards with each ebb and flow of the tide. A thousand acres of rich land lay deep beneath the water. The rush of the outrunning tide carried great masses of mud and earth into the river, forming a spit or sandbank a mile long, and stretching halfway across the Thames.

Local efforts to stop the breach failed, and so the gap grew wider and the sandbank larger. At last, the spit of mud and sand stretched out like a broad delta, through which ran wide streams of water. The fairway of the Thames, the life of the commerce of the great city of London, was threatened.

Parliament had to take the matter up to save the waterway to London, and the sum of £25,000 was promised to the engineer who, in 1718, undertook the task of repairing the breach. After five years of difficulty he

successfully stopped the great gap at a cost which we are told, in somewhat amusingly precise figures, was £40,472 18s. 8¾d. He was paid altogether £40,000, and was left to find what satisfaction he could for the balance in the knowledge of good work well done.

CHAPTER XLII

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: "A KNIGHT OF THE ROAD"

During the years in which the first three Georges sat upon the throne, Essex, so far as stirring events are concerned, had an uneventful history. It was, however, a time of prosperity for the county. Its fertile cornlands and its fat pasturages were a great source of the food supply of London, which poured into the city over Old Bow Bridge, which still stood after the lapse of centuries.

Many readers, no doubt, have seen over collecting-boxes for the London Hospital a picture of Mile End Road in the eighteenth century. We see there the cattle and sheep being driven along the road from Essex and the eastern counties into London. We notice, too, the fields on both sides of the road where now stretch miles of houses. It will, of course, be remembered that, in the eighteenth century, all the traffic to and from London passed along the roads, except such as reached the city by the great highway of the river. Nowadays, much of this traffic goes by rail, and hence, although there were fewer people in the land in those days, the country roads were busier than they are to-day.

Yet the roads, till towards the end of the eighteenth century, were very bad. The coaches of the rich, drawn by four or six horses, often stuck axle-deep in the mud,

and stopped there till a neighbouring farmer brought his team to pull them out. Active people who could afford it travelled on horseback; the tradesmen and small gentry journeyed by the stage coach; poor people trudged from place to place, or rumbled along in the jolting stage waggon at a pace of some four miles an hour.

The bad roads and the great stretches of unenclosed land, over which escape on a swift horse was easy, made highway robbery a favourite pursuit for the criminals of the time.

Yet the eighteenth century was a time of savage punishments. In every village stood the stocks for trivial offences, as they still stand, a relic of the past, in the village of Havering. The lash was freely used, and there were more than a hundred crimes punishable with death. The prisons were dens of pestilence, and the bodies of criminals hung here and there from gibbets by the wayside. The amusements of the people too were brutal; cockfighting and prize-fighting were favourite sports. The Essex marshes, on account of their loneliness and nearness to London, were the scene of many prize-fights during this period.

But crime was not checked by the savage punishments which were dealt out. Highway robbery was especially frequent on the great east roads through Essex to London, where the highwaymen found ready shelter in the wide stretches of the forest. The most famous of all these rascals, who preyed upon honest wayfarers, was Dick Turpin. Many stories have been written about Turpin, in which he is made out to be rather a fine, dashing fellow, a little too free with other people's money perhaps, but not at all a bad fellow at heart. It is to be feared that he was, in truth, a sorry enough rascal, with plenty of vulgar courage and boldness no doubt, but a blackguard through and through.

Therefore, Essex people can scarcely feel much pride in the fact that Turpin was born at Hempstead in their county. After spending some time as a butcher, he worked with a farmer who lived in Richmond Street, Plaistow. But honest work was not much to Dick's taste, so he drove off two of his master's oxen and tried to sell them at Waltham Abbey Market. The cattle were recognized but Turpin escaped by jumping through a window.

Cattle-stealing not proving sufficiently profitable, Dick turned his attention to another popular occupation of the time. Throughout the eighteenth century smuggling was rife in Essex, both on the sea coast and along the river shore. Smacks brought tobacco and spirits, and landed them on the marshes. Thence they were driven away in carts, which were fitted with false bottoms, so that their burdens appeared to be nothing but innocent loads of hay or straw. The smugglers' task was made the easier by the fact that many of the people were in sympathy with them. Folk who were honest enough in other matters had no objection to buying brandy or tobacco at a cheap rate and saying nothing about it.

Such an occupation was no doubt much to Dick's taste, especially as there was the excitement of an occasional skirmish with the coast-guards. For some time, he was the leader of a gang working the shores of the Thames between Plaistow and Southend.

Some reason or another, however, caused Turpin to give up the trade, and with a man named King he embarked upon the profitable but dangerous occupation of highway robbery. They made their head quarters in Epping Forest, where, at High Beech, "Dick Turpin's Cave" may still be seen. They did so well in their new profession, and relieved so many worthy gentlemen of their purses and watches, that the Government issued a proclamation

offering a reward of £200 for Turpin's arrest. The proclamation describes the robber thus :—" About 5 feet 9 inches high, brown complexion, very much marked with the small-pox, his cheek-bones broad, his visage short," so that the dashing hero of so many romances does not appear to have been a very pretty fellow in reality.

One day Turpin, who was riding a horse stolen on Plaistow Marsh, met a gentleman mounted on a thoroughbred. By his usual argument, a loaded pistol, he prevailed upon the gentleman to exchange mounts. A little later, the thoroughbred was recognized by an inn-keeper, and an attempt was made to arrest Turpin and his partner King. In the fight that ensued, Turpin accidentally shot his friend, but escaped himself with the hue and cry hot upon his heels. Then, according to the story-tellers, occurred the famous ride to York on the mare Black Bess. That exploit, however, really belongs to an earlier highwayman, though it is true that Dick made good his escape into Yorkshire.

There he set up, under a false name, as a horse-dealer, and as he obtained his stock-in-trade at the cheap rate of stealing the animals at night from the pastures, or by persuading their owners to hand them over by the threat of a loaded pistol, we are not surprised to learn that the business was very prosperous. However, he got into trouble through foolishly shooting a gamecock, which in those days of cockfighting was a valuable creature, and was lodged in the lock-up. In this difficulty, he wrote a letter to his brother at Hempstead asking for help. As it happened, the letter caught the eye of the village schoolmaster, who recognized the handwriting of his former pupil.

The clue was followed up and, at the trial, it was found that the Yorkshire horse-dealer was no other than the notorious Dick Turpin. He was condemned to death

and hanged at York, no doubt wishing that his schoolmaster had been either less successful in teaching him to write or more successful in teaching him that " honesty is the best policy ".

CHAPTER XLIII

ESSEX REVELS

A NUMBER of old Essex festivals are especially connected with the eighteenth century, either because they began then or flourished most about that time.

The most famous of these is the very ancient custom known as the " Dunmow Flitch ". That the custom is very, very old is shown by the lines in the old poet Chaucer :

> The bacon was not brought for them, I trow,
> That some men have in Essex, at Dunmow.

If tradition is correct, it was an old custom even in Chaucer's time. It appears, also, that a similar custom was at one time observed in Brittany.

The manor of Dunmow, for a long time, belonged to the family of the Fitzwalters, the most famous member of which was the leader of the barons in their struggle with King John. At Dunmow, from early times, there had been a priory, and the story tells us that the prior rewarded one of the Fitzwalters with a flitch of bacon for the kind way in which he treated Lady Fitzwalter. One hopes that it was not *very* unusual in those days for a husband to treat his wife kindly, and in any case, it is rather hard to understand why a flitch of bacon was considered a suitable reward for the lord of the manor, who surely had plenty of pigs in his woodland and a larder well stocked with bacon. Be that as

it may, the tradition tells us that Fitzwalter decreed that, from that time forward, any couple, who had been married not less than a twelvemonth and a day, who should come forward and claim that they had never quarrelled and never used harsh words to one another, and who should maintain their claim before a judge and jury, should receive a flitch of bacon.

Remains of Dunmow Priory

Thus, according to the story, arose "the Custom of Little Dunmow". The claimants had to appear before a mock court of law, the head of which, in early times, was the prior. There was a jury of six unmarried men and six maidens, and witnesses were called for and against the claimants. If the judge and jury held that they had made out a good case, a procession was formed to the Priory Church, the bells pealing gaily and the folks strewing flowers in the way of the happy couple. Arrived at the church, they knelt upon two "swearing stones"

and made oath that they had never quarrelled and never, in word or thought, repented of their marriage. They were then awarded the flitch, and "chaired" round the town in an ancient chair kept for the purpose, amidst cheering and shouting, ringing of bells and much merry-making. The Priory was of course closed at the dissolu-

The Dunmow Flitch (From an old print)

tion of the monasteries, but the old custom went on. As one writer puts it, "the old religion of the place was gone; but the bacon was saved," and the steward of the manor took the place of the prior as the judge.

The records of the trials which took place in the eighteenth century are drawn up in lawyer's style, and are quite formidable documents. The real old custom died out in 1751, when the flitch was awarded to an Essex woolcomber and his wife. The woolcomber seems to have

been not only a good husband, but also a good man of business, for he promptly turned his flitch into rashers, which he sold at rates considerably above the market price of bacon, among the five thousand people who had come to see the show and to join in the merry-making.

A hundred years later, an attempt was made to revive the old custom. Within the last few years also, the trial for the flitch has several times been held, the whole affair being treated as a joke from which everybody concerned tries to get as much fun as possible.

For a long succession of years, a rougher sport than the merry-making of Dunmow drew thousands of Londoners every Easter to the glades of the Forest for the "Epping Hunt". Exactly how the custom arose cannot be said. Our early kings were very jealous in guarding their hunting rights in the Forest. There is, however, a shadowy kind of story that one of our old kings granted the Lord Mayor and citizens of London the right of hunting in the forest. Certainly we know that the Lord Mayor did hunt there, but, probably, it was in a private wood belonging to him, rather than in the forest at large.

Whatever may have been the actual right of the people to engage in the sport, the hunt annually took place on each Easter Monday down to comparatively recent times. The field of sportsmen assembled at Fairmead Glade; some on foot, some mounted on all manner of nags. A forest buck, whose antlers were decorated with ribands, was brought to the meeting-place in a cart. When it was released the poor creature, no doubt much terrified at the multitudes who had suddenly disturbed the silence of the woods, set off to find refuge in the forest depths. Then the hounds were sent in chase, and the crowd of huntsmen, on foot or on horseback, followed pell-mell. It is well that this custom has ceased,

for it is surely more interesting and beautiful to catch occasional glimpses of the deer as they bound securely through the woodland glades than to pursue them in a disorderly rabble. The hunt is probably best remembered, because it formed the subject of one of Tom Hood's humorous poems. No doubt he wrote of what

Lake House, Wanstead Flats (Pulled down in 1908)

he had seen, for he lived for some time on the forest border at Lake House—which has recently been pulled down—on the edge of Wanstead Flats.

Another famous Essex revel centred upon Fairlop Oak. This huge old tree, which stood in Hainault Forest, had a girth of 36 feet. It was nearly 12 feet thick, and its seventeen branches, each as thick as an ordinary oak, spread their shade over an area 300 feet in circumference.

Many a king and noble, and many a deerstealer too, many a robber, and many a simple peasant, must have sheltered beneath its branches during the long centuries in which it was the pride of the Forest.

Early in the eighteenth century, a worthy tradesman, who had made money in London, settled down in Essex, and conceived a great affection for the fine old tree. His name was Day; a curious, eccentric man, but so kind and generous that he generally went by the name of *Good Day*. This worthy man formed the custom of going, on the first Friday in every July, with some of his friends to Fairlop, and there eating, beneath his beloved oak, a dinner of beans and bacon. The fashion spread; from all the country round and from London too, folks came to eat their beans and bacon at Fairlop, and with them came pedlars and hawkers with all manner of trinkets for sale, showmen and tumblers and mountebanks of all kinds, and a great fair visited by thousands of people was set up.

A curious feature of the festival was the visit of some of Day's fellow tradesmen from Wapping. They came in a strange vehicle; a boat fashioned out of a single piece of wood mounted on wheels and drawn by six horses. Perhaps the form of the carriage was adopted as a compliment to one of the whims of the founder of the fair. He had a great dislike for land vehicles of all kinds. When he died and was carried, in a coffin made from a bough of the Fairlop Oak, to be buried in Barking Churchyard, his body was conveyed to the graveyard in a boat, in accordance with his dying request.

Fairlop Oak no longer stands. Careless people damaged it by fire in 1805, and some years afterwards the old tree, weakened by its injuries, was blown down in a great gale. Those, however, who travel by the new loop-line of the Great Eastern Railway, between Ilford

and Woodford, pass through a station named Fairlop. At Lambourne End, we may still wander through a small but beautiful fragment of the once extensive Forest of Hainault in which the famous oak stood. Beyond the wood too, we may now walk over upland fields, once

Fairlop Oak

forest land, then turned into farms, and now made free to the people for ever. There, lying upon Hog Hill in the cool of an evening in early summer, we may hear the nightingales, in spite of King Edward the Confessor's banishment of their kind from the neighbouring village of Havering, singing in the thickets. We may, too, be fortunate enough to see the dome of St. Paul's towering above the purple mist of London, the Crystal Palace flashing back the rays of the setting sun, and a few shining reaches of the great river as it runs seaward.

Then, as the hills of Kent and Surrey grow dim through the violet haze of the summer night, the long rows of lights break out along the streets and roads of the suburbs of the great city, and above them appears the glorious company of the stars. Well it is for Essex people, who dwell in the crowded streets of London-over-the-Border, that these fragments of the ancient forests of their county are now secured to them and to their children for ever, for their refreshment and delight.

CHAPTER XLIV

AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY MANSION

Though Essex had, in the eighteenth century, ceased to be a place of royal residence, it was dotted over with the great houses of rich gentlefolks and, on the London border, with the mansions of wealthy city merchants.

Scores, indeed hundreds, of the latter houses have been pulled down in the last few years, to make way for the long rows of small houses which now shelter hundreds of thousands of London's workers. Nevertheless, there may still be seen here and there on the Essex fringes of London many of these old Georgian houses, left stranded in districts not yet quite ready for the builder.

Square and solidly built of brick they stand, suggesting in their appearance something of the character of the time, a hard, cold age when many men had lost the inner light of the spirit and the sense of natural beauty. Indeed, the beauty of Nature at this time made but little appeal even to people of fine intellect and ability. The glorious scenery of the Highlands of Scotland, or of Switzerland, was "savage" or "barbarous", and Nature was only admired when brought into strict

subjection by man. Therefore, gardens were laid out in prim and stiff rectangles and triangles, parted by close-trimmed hedges.

The same spirit is seen in the buildings. The old Gothic was scoffed at as rude and barbarous, and builders sought to imitate the architecture of the Romans and Greeks. We have seen how this movement began in Tudor times as one result of the Revival of Learning.

Wanstead House

In the eighteenth century it gathered strength, and in the great buildings of the time you will find the rows of columns with Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian capitals, and the porticoes copied from classic models. Frequently old houses were altered to suit this taste for the classic style, and a number of beautiful dwelling-places in our county were spoilt in the process.

The most splendid of the houses built during this period was the Great House at Wanstead. It has already been mentioned that Queen Elizabeth visited her favourite,

the Earl of Leicester, at Wanstead House. Later, the old building was occupied for a time by another royal favourite, the famous Duke of Buckingham, during the reign of James I. Still later, it belonged to Sir Henry Mildmay, one of the judges who signed the death warrant of Charles I. When Charles II got back the throne of his fathers Sir Henry's estate was forfeited and, after passing through several hands, became the property of Sir Josiah Child, governor of the famous old East India Company. Sir Josiah made a huge fortune, and his son, afterwards Earl Tylney, pulled down the old house and built, in its place, a vast mansion in the fashionable style. The house was a rectangular block, 260 feet long and 75 feet deep, built of Portland stone. The main entrance was approached by a double flight of steps leading up to a classical portico supported by Corinthian columns. The house, we are told, cost £100,000, and about the same sum was spent in laying out the grounds, "the most delicious as well as the most spacious pieces of ground that are to be seen in this part of England," said Defoe.

The second earl, after the manner of wealthy people of the time, filled this great house with costly sculptures and pictures, so that it was, altogether, one of the most magnificent private houses in the country.

The downfall of the mansion occurred in the early part of the nineteenth century. The second earl died without children and the estate passed to a relative. He also died, and thus in the closing years of the eighteenth century the property fell to his only daughter, Miss Tylney-Long. This lady was the greatest heiress of the time and possessed an income of £80,000 a year. Unfortunately for herself, she married a son of the Earl of Mornington, a reckless spendthrift, who, in ten years, squandered the vast fortune of his wife. The art treasures

of the house were then sold to find further means for his wild extravagance, but the money obtained in a thirty-two days' sale did not last long in the hands of a man who could not live on £80,000 a year. The great house was pulled down for the sake of the money the building materials would fetch, and, shortly afterwards, the unhappy heiress, whose wealth had brought her nothing but wretchedness, died of a broken heart.

What a contrast does the life of this idle and dissolute spendthrift afford with the career of his uncle, the great Duke of Wellington! On the one hand, the useless, heartless prodigal; on the other, the faithful and unswerving servant of his country, who, loaded with honours and bearing the weight of years of faithful service, died in his hard camp-bed at Walmer Castle, and whose life and death afford for all time an example of the truth that,

> Not once or twice in our rough island-story
> The path of duty was the way to glory.

Fortunately, though Wanstead House is gone, the people of Essex and of London will always be able to enjoy some of the beauties of its famous grounds. Wanstead Park, the remains of these, was bought by the City of London in 1880. All are now free to wander among its fine trees and glades, and by its lakes, made animated by the presence of the swans and wild ducks and moorhens. Overhead, too, a glimpse may now and then be caught of the strong flight of a heron, returning to the heronry which still exists on one of the islands of the chief lake.

CHAPTER XLV

"NAPOLEON'S BANNERS AT BOULOGNE"

The nineteenth century opened with England engaged in the great struggle with Napoleon. In our county its first few years were a time of great anxiety. The shadow of invasion by the victorious French armies lay upon the land, and many people thought it probable that a descent would be made in Essex. We read, indeed, of some timorous people leaving Colchester for places less likely to be in the line of advance of the enemy landing on the Essex coast and marching upon London.

But it was not in this faint-hearted spirit that the majority of the people took the threat of invasion :

> When Napoleon's banners at Boulogne,
> Armed in our island every freeman,

the people of Essex sprang to arms. Volunteers were enrolled in all parts of the county—one gentleman alone raised 1,700 men—camps were formed at Danbury, Clacton, Warley and other places, earthworks thrown up and guns mounted. The Martello towers, which you may see at Clacton and many other places on the eastern and southern coasts, date, in most cases, from this time.

Once again, too, the old beacons, which had flared out into the night the news of the coming of the Armada, were supplied with stores of wood and tar. Orders were given that no weeds and rubbish should be burned in the fields, lest the rising smoke of the farmers' fires should be taken for the warning beacon, telling of the coming of war into the peaceful fields and woodlands of Essex.

But the beacons, fortunately for our county and our land, were not lit. Once again the ships and the seamen of England protected her shores on the high seas. At Trafalgar, the heroic Nelson destroyed the French fleet :

> To him as to the burning levin,
> Short, bright, resistless course was given.
> Till burst the bolt on yonder shore,
> Rolled, blazed, destroyed,—and was no more.

But though Nelson died, his work was done. Henceforth there was no fear of invasion. This is not the place to tell anew the story of Trafalgar. We may recall, however, how the British fleet bore down upon the enemy in two lines, led respectively by Nelson and by Collingwood. The second ship in Nelson's line, the *Téméraire*, was commanded by an Essex man, Captain Harvey, of Rolls Park, Chigwell. Nelson had given orders that the ships should make all sail to close with the enemy, and, as they bore down upon them, the *Téméraire* was outsailing Nelson's ship, the *Victory*. The great sailor, however, could not bear that another should be the first to grapple with the foe, and ordered Harvey to keep his station.

The mastery of the seas, which Nelson's victories gave Britain, enabled our statesmen to send our soldiers abroad and to strike a blow on the Continent against the power of Napoleon. In the campaigns of Wellington in Portugal and Spain, which we know by the name of the Peninsular War, and in the final overthrow of Napoleon at Waterloo, the East Essex Regiment bore a distinguished part.

The East Essex Regiment, now the 1st Battalion of the Essex Regiment, was numbered the 44th Regiment of Foot, and from its number and its exploits won the names of the "Little Two Fours" and the "Fighting Two

Fours". At Salamanca, the 44th captured a French eagle, while at Quatre Bras, two days before "that world's earthquake, Waterloo", it performed a very notable feat of arms. Drawn up in *line*, not in square as was usual when infantry were attacked by cavalry, the regiment received and beat off a fierce attack of the French Lancers.

Later honours were won in the Crimea and in South Africa. The battles of the Crimea were shared in by the 2nd Battalion of the Essex Regiment—the old 58th, known as the "Pompadours". During the Peninsular War this regiment was on service in India. There, and at the great siege of Gibraltar and elsewhere, the regiment has had a fine record of service.

CHAPTER XLVI

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

A HUNDRED years ago, Essex still remained almost entirely a land of woodland and farms. Along the great eastern roads, by this time much improved in surface, swept the coaches and the traffic between London and the eastern counties. Relics of this traffic are to be found, at intervals, all along the main roads, in the old coaching inns, which were not mere drinking shops but places which offered food and rest and shelter for travellers and their horses. One such old inn—now much altered—is the old Swan Inn at Stratford, in the very heart of the busiest part of the Essex of to-day. Another famous and much more ancient inn is the King's Head at Chigwell, a fine old house which will always be celebrated because it is the inn which Dickens describes under the name of The Maypole in his novel *Barnaby Rudge*.

While the great war still went on, recruiting parties passed through the towns and villages seeking soldiers for the army of Wellington, while in the ports and riverside towns, sailors and marines "pressed" men for the fleet. On one occasion a great mob of the people of Barking overpowered the press gang, took away the sword of the officer in command, and severely handled the men.

The influence of London, except as a market for Essex corn and cattle, was as yet but little felt. Only rich people, having business in London, could afford to dwell so far away from the great city. From Plaistow, for example, there was but one daily coach to London. Travellers who wished to make the journey of some six miles had to book their seats overnight and were required to pay a fare of three shillings for the return journey inside the coach.

The number of houses, especially of well-to-do people, steadily increased, however, on the western border of the county. Even a royal duke, the Duke of Cumberland, brother of George III, had in the eighteenth century a house at Plaistow which, under the name of Cumberland House, still stands. Here the Duke kept his racing stables. At Stratford House, in the Grove, Stratford, dwelt two Lord Hennikers in succession. Shops built out in front now quite alter the appearance of the old house. At Ham House, Upton, dwelt Dr. Fothergill, until his death in the latter part of the eighteenth century. The learned doctor laid out in his grounds so splendid a collection of foreign plants and trees that his garden was said to be—from the botanist's point of view—the finest in Europe except Kew Gardens. Ham House has long since been pulled down, but the children of the district play in its grounds, which now form the public Park of West Ham, and refresh themselves at a curious

PUBLIC
DEPTFORD

drinking fountain. There the water issues from a pile of huge stones that marks the site of the old house. Some of the very trees that Dr. Fothergill planted still grow in the park.

Early in the nineteenth century Ham House became the property of Samuel Gurney, a philanthropist to whose memory an obelisk stands in Stratford Broadway. He was the head of one of the many wealthy Quaker

Ham House, Upton

families who dwelt in this neighbourhood during the first half of the nineteenth century. He built, in a part of the grounds of Ham House, another dwelling-house, which still stands. It is now known as "The Cedars", and is the head quarters of the 6th (Territorial) Battalion of the Essex Regiment. In this house, for some sixteen years, lived Samuel Gurney's famous sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Fry. This noble-hearted lady devoted a great part of her life to helping the poor, the weak, and the fallen. In 1813

she chanced to visit the women prisoners in Newgate Prison. There she found three hundred women of all ages ; some convicted of crime and others not yet tried, and therefore, in the eye of the law, innocent. All of them were herded together in horrible filth and squalor. They were clad in rags and besmeared with dirt, and had no place but the bare floor upon which to sleep. The sight filled her with pity and with a resolve to devote her life to the noble task of improving the lot and, if it might be, the minds of these poor fallen ones. Nor were her labours without avail, and in brightening the lives and kindling anew the hopes of those whom folly or despair had driven to crime she won herself a worthy place among the noble women of our land. In her own days even, a king came to honour her. The King of Prussia visited her at " The Cedars ", when he came to England to attend the christening of the baby prince who now sits upon the throne as Edward VII.

Facing West Ham Park stands Upton House, where, in 1827, was born the great surgeon, Lord Lister, who, by the use of antiseptics in surgery, brought one of the greatest possible boons to mankind. His discovery saves the lives of tens of thousands of people every year.

CHAPTER XLVII

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION IN ESSEX

But a great change was impending over South-western Essex in the early part of the nineteenth century. Watt had harnessed the giant power of steam to machinery, Stephenson and others had pressed it into the service of the traveller by land and by sea.

So great a change did the use of steam produce that we sometimes speak of it as the Industrial Revolution, a revolution which produced wider results than most political upheavals. The cottage hand-industries almost died out, and workers began to be gathered by hundreds or thousands into huge factories, where they tended the steam-driven machines. In general, these factories grew up in districts where coal, the food of Giant Steam, is cheap, and thus the woollen industry of Essex and the eastern counties perished.

But, though South-west Essex has no coal, it has a splendid natural position for trade. It stands at the gateway of the greatest city of the world, with long lines of river and canal frontage, and close to the huge central mart and world market-place, London. As steam, too, began to take the place of sails in ships, and as steamers grew ever larger and larger, new dock-space had to be built for them, so that they could unload lying in deep water at the dock-side instead of discharging their cargoes into lighters in the river. Thus arose the need for the great docks on the Essex bank of the Thames.

But these advantages of position possessed by the low-lying districts of South-west Essex could not be fully used until land communication with London was improved. The first important step, before the coming of

the railway, was the making of the Barking Road, in 1810, which for the first time gave a direct road to London to the inhabitants of the little villages of East Ham and Plaistow. Later, in 1839, the first section of the Eastern Counties Railway—now the Great Eastern Railway—from Devonshire Street to Romford was opened. Some years later the line from Stratford Market to North Woolwich was made, and the network of railways which now covers this part of the county gradually grew up. One of the first of the great firms which took advantage of the facilities which the railway gave was the ship-building firm out of which grew the Thames Ironworks and Shipbuilding Company. This company has built a long succession of battleships, from the *Warrior*, launched in 1860, which was the first of our sea-going ironclads, to the first-class cruiser the *Black Prince*, launched in 1906. Later came the firm of Silver & Co., the great indiarubber and telegraph cable company which gave its name to Silvertown.

About the middle of the century an important addition was made to the commercial importance of South-west Essex by the opening of the Victoria Docks. Not till considerably later, in 1880, were the Albert Docks, which are connected with them, completed. Together the two docks are $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles long. Some years afterwards came the opening of the Tilbury Docks, built on the Essex coast some 26 miles from London Bridge. These docks take the largest steamers that enter the port.

Meanwhile, other firms had been attracted to the Essex marshlands by the cheapness of the sites, the advantage of water carriage, and the nearness of London. Prominent among these was the Gas Light and Coke Company, which supplies the greater part of London with gas. The company bought a tract of 500 acres and gave it the name of Beckton, after their chairman,

Mr. Beck. There they built piers to accommodate their colliers, and railway lines, worked by thirty locomotives, to carry the coal to the retorts. The huge gasometers, in which gas for the use of London is stored, are prominent features seen from rising ground in Essex, miles away. Many other great firms also established themselves in the district. The river front between Bow Creek, on the boundary between Essex and London, and Barking Creek is now lined with great factories. In the middle of the last century only two houses stood on this part of the river front.

Nor was this conversion of the marshland into a great manufacturing district confined to the banks of the Thames. The marshes of the Lea and the Channelsea were also transformed and their flats rapidly covered with great factories ; engineering works, soap and candle factories, chemical works, jute mills, and the busy hives of scores of other industries. The works of the Great Eastern Railway, at Stratford, also added many thousands of workers and their families to the population of this district.

CHAPTER XLVIII

LONDON-OVER-THE-BORDER

But an even more powerful cause of the great increase of population in the part of Essex adjoining the borders of London lay in the great increase in the population of that city itself, together with the means of rapid and cheap travelling which the railways gave to its workers.

In all directions the population of London overflowed into suburbs, ever spreading farther and farther from the heart of the city. In the east, the overflow crossed the River Lea, and towns grew up where a few years ago there

were great stretches of fields and market gardens. To a large extent, these new suburbs are mere sleeping-places for the workers who, in tens of thousands, pour into London every morning by train and tram and motor-bus. They have well been called " dormitories of London ", and every year they stretch their long rows of villas and cottages farther and farther into the green places of Essex.

Thus it comes about that, though the population of Essex has, in the rural districts, either remained practically at a standstill or actually decreased during the last hundred years, yet the population of the county as a whole has increased enormously. Indeed, the increase during the ten years ending at the time of the last census was much greater than the increase in any other county in England and Wales. During that time the population of Essex increased more than 38 per cent., the next highest increase being 25 per cent. in the case of Glamorgan.

About a half of the whole present population of the county lies within the West Ham Registration District, which includes the county borough of West Ham, the municipal borough of East Ham, and the urban districts of Leyton and Walthamstow. In these and in neighbouring places the increase during the past hundred years has been startling. In 1801, West Ham had a population of 6,500 ; it now has 322,000 inhabitants. East Ham has sprung from 1,000 to 150,000 ; Leyton from 2,500 to 130,000 ; Walthamstow from a few thousands to 137,000 ; Barking and Ilford together from 4,000 to 100,000.

Thus, in the Essex " London-over-the-Border " there is now a group of continuous towns, with only artificial boundaries between them, which shelter a population of 878,000 people. Moreover, this great multitude of inhabitants is still increasing at a rate of something like 30,000 a year. Through this crowded district, the stranger

may travel for miles along the main roads without knowing when he passes from one district to another: from Bow Bridge, for example, through Stratford, Forest Gate, Manor Park, East Ham, Little Ilford, Ilford, Seven Kings, Goodmayes to Chadwell Heath, with the whirr of the electric tramcar accompanying him all the way.

What is to be the future of this district, containing

Southend (in 1831)

a population greater than any city of the British Isles except London? Is it to continue to be governed by a number of separate bodies, or shall it become a part of London? A third proposal is that it should remain a part of Essex as one great town, for which the name Eastminster has been suggested. If this is done, the coining of a place-name will be no new thing in the district. Many places in the area have had new names found for them, just as names have had to be coined for places that have

sprung up on the prairies of America or in the bush of Australia. Beckton and Silvertown are examples; and Forest Gate, which now has the population of a large and important town, gets its name from a gate which formerly kept animals from straying from the forest on to the high road.

In another and more distant part of the county the growth of London has also caused a great increase of population. This is upon the sea coast, where towns have grown up as seaside playgrounds for London's millions. Not long ago, Southend as a town or even as a village did not exist. The only place of any importance on the Essex side of Thames-mouth was the ancient fishing village of Leigh. Southend was merely the *south end* of the village of Prittlewell, which lies some distance inland. To-day, it is a large town, which during the last few years has grown with amazing rapidity and now stretches for miles along the shore. Clacton, and its smaller neighbour, Frinton, are also of recent growth; places of hotels and boarding-houses and shops for the use of the thousands of visitors who flock to them in the summer. Walton and Dovercourt, though older than Clacton, are also quite modern towns.

Harwich is an ancient town. For centuries it was one of the chief commercial and naval ports of the east coast. It was also a fortress, its chief defence being Landguard Fort, built on the Suffolk side of the estuary of the Stour and Orwell. Its trade as a modern port has been much increased by the rise of Parkeston, created, out of the mud of the Stour, by the Great Eastern Railway for its Continental steamboat service.

CHAPTER XLIX

RURAL ESSEX: CONCLUSION

The increase in the population of Essex is, as we have seen, confined to but a small part of the county. The greater part still remains a region of rural quietness and peace. This rural part of Essex has, of late years, been much less prosperous than in former centuries.

So long as corn was high in price, rural Essex was prosperous, for its climate and large areas of its surface are very favourable to the growing of wheat. But with the fall in the price of corn, large areas of ploughed lands have been converted into grass-lands. The scanty rainfall of the county, however, prevents its being so good a district for pasturing cattle and for the growth of hay as many other parts of England. Hence, rural Essex has fallen upon times of adversity, and many of the villages and hamlets have decreased in population during recent years.

Many of these rural solitudes have been little changed during the last hundred years, except that the green of the grass-lands has largely taken the place of the brown earth or golden grain of the cornfields. True, during that century much of the woodland of the county was despoiled. Epping Forest comprised 6,000 acres in 1850, but, during the following twenty years, half this area was fenced in by people who had no right to it. Happily this was, in a large degree, put right in 1878, by an Act of Parliament which preserved over 5,500 acres for the use of the people.

Hainault Forest, too, was almost destroyed, its fair trees stubbed up, and its woodland glades ploughed up to make cornfields. It is of this "improvement" that Sir Walter Besant writes in *All in a Garden Fair*: "They

converted miles of wild forest, with rough uplands and green dales, covered with grand old trees, into a treeless tract, staked out in square fields and rectangular roads. Then they wagged their stupid heads, and rubbed together their ridiculous hands, and said it was a great improvement."

Old Houses, Dunmow

Happily, a great part of this land has within the last few years been secured for the use of the people. The cornfields have gone back into grass, clumps of gorse and broom have sprung up, and the whole has been made free to all. Close by is the remaining fragment of the beautiful Forest of Hainault, "everywhere the freshness and fragrance of the wild wood, always light and colour even in January, when the delicate purple bloom lies upon the masses of bush and shrub, and the late leaves linger on

the sheltered branches, and always silence and rest from the talk of man."

Many, who do not know our county, think of it as a dreary flat-land. Only the fringing marshlands, however, can be thus described. Desolate the marshes certainly are, though they are not without their peculiar beauty in the delicate colours of the sea-thrift, the purple of the sea-lavender, the flash of the kingfisher across the streams, the flocks of sea-birds and the countless wildfowl of winter.

But a great part of the county is a land of gently rolling hills and of little valleys, hills never very high and valleys never very deep, but fair and pleasant and homelike and dotted with ancient oaks and immemorial elms.

> Such an up and down
> Of verdure,—nothing too much up or down,
> A ripple of land ; such little hills, the sky
> Can stoop to tenderly and the wheatfields climb ;
> Such nooks of valleys, lined with orchises,
> Fed full of noises by invisible streams ;
> And open pastures, where you can scarcely tell
> White daisies from white dew—at intervals
> The mythic oaks and elm-trees standing out
> Self-poised upon their prodigy of shade.

The scenery along the banks of the Stour, which forms the northern boundary of Essex, has been made famous for all time by the brush of the great landscape painter Constable. He was born in the valley of the Stour, a short distance outside the Essex border, and on the banks of that river he passed a great part of his life. As a boy he went to school in the Essex village of Dedham. Many of his greatest pictures have as their subjects the scenery of the borders of Essex and Suffolk. Some, such as "Dedham Vale", "Dedham Mill", and

"Flatford Mill", are named after places in Essex, while others, such as "The Hay Wain", "The White Horse", and "The Lock", depict scenes in the same neighbourhood. So closely, indeed, is the district connected with the painter's genius that it is frequently spoken of as "Constable's country".

BRAINTREE (From an old print)

Such a county, in its pleasant, homelike beauty, is not unworthy of our love. Nor is its story unworthy of a reasonable pride in the part which Essex men and women have played in the great story of our motherland. Their lives and doings speak to us from many an ancient monument; from castle keeps and grey old churches, from manor halls and moated farms, even from the very earth with which their dust is mingled. May the story of their lives, and of both the good and the evil deeds of history, inspire us to

follow faithfully in the ways of wisdom, truth, and justice, "that the glory which was from the first upon England alone may endure to the last," and that our work for her, humble though it may be, may at the least be faithful and true.

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